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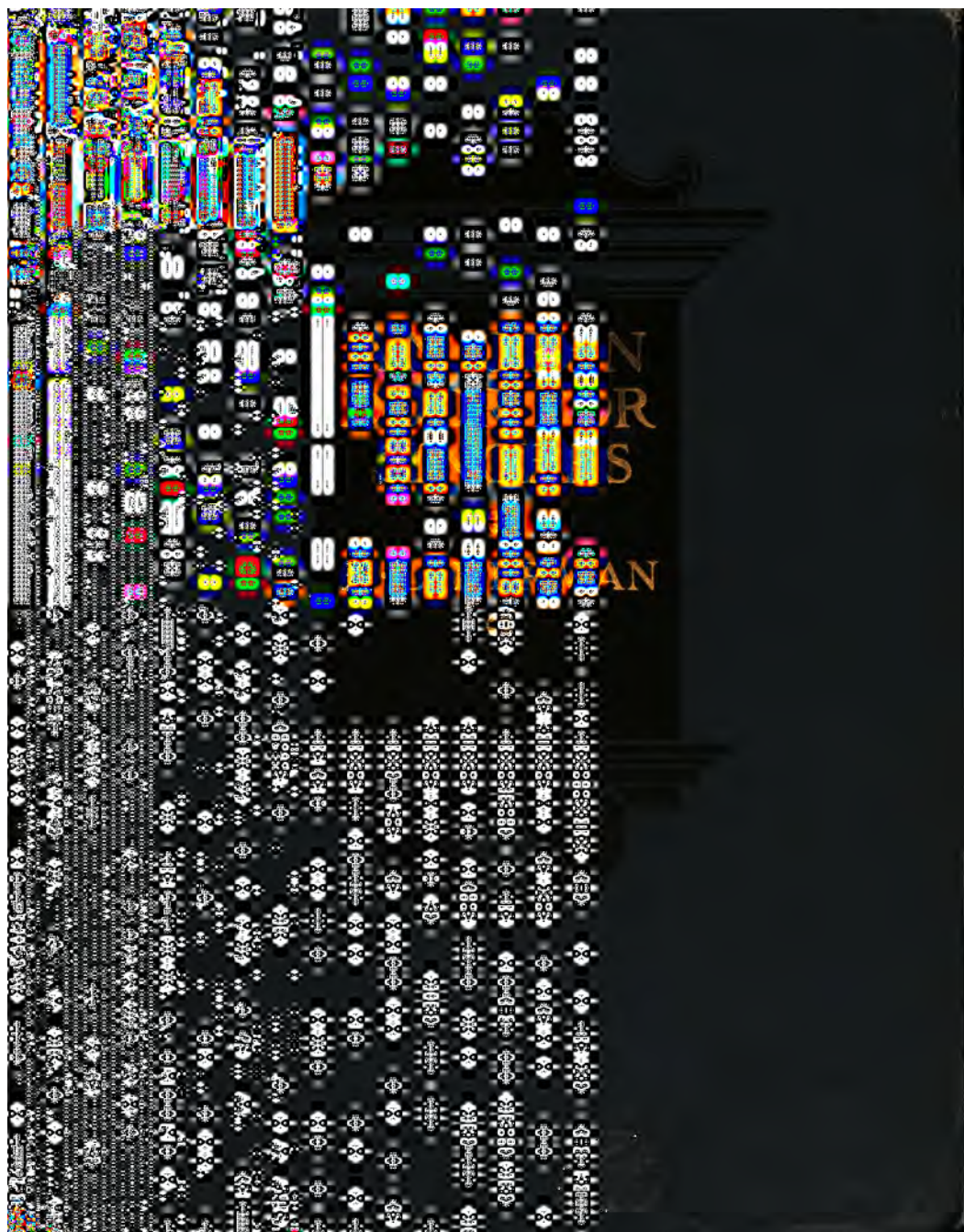
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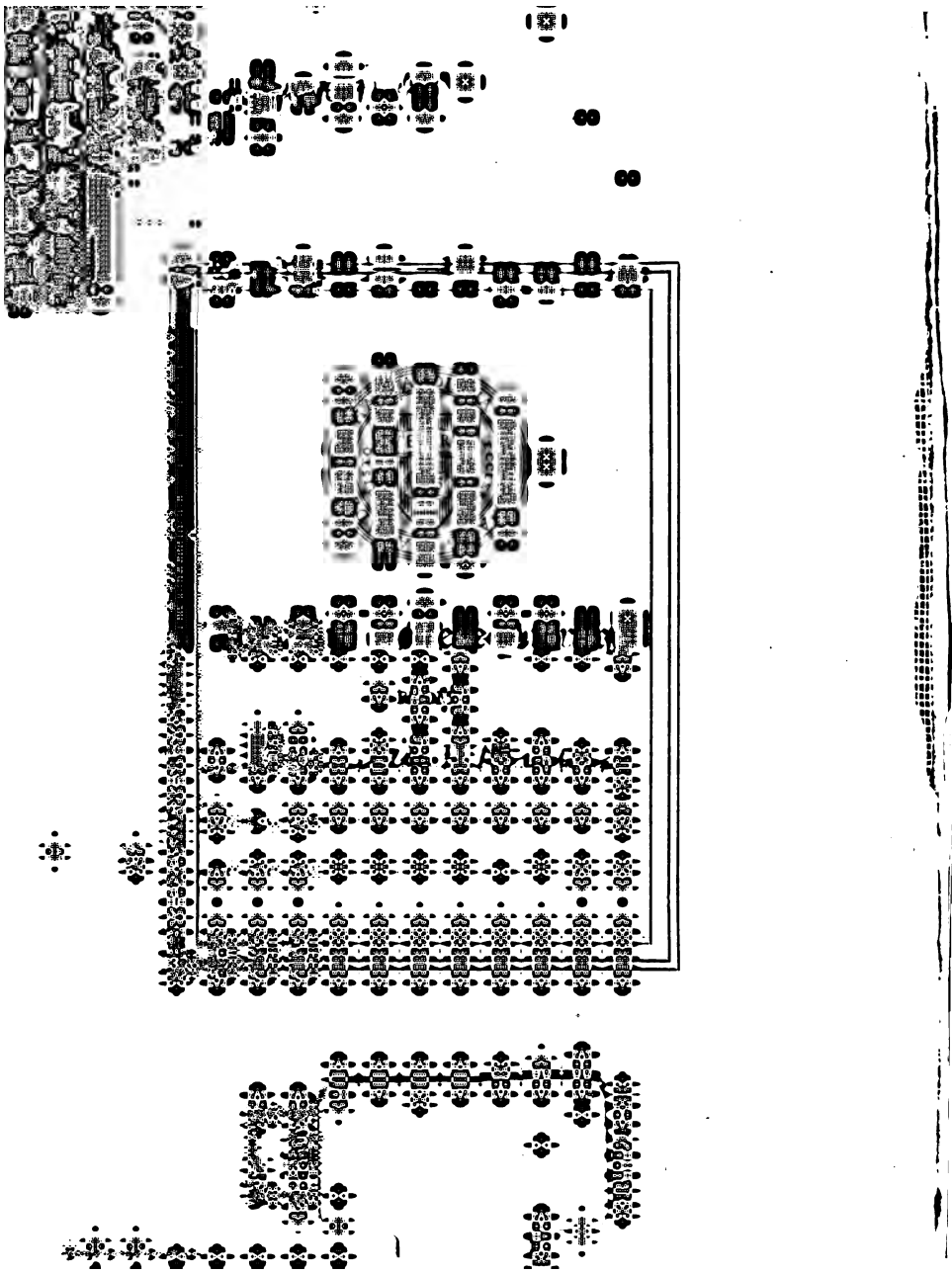
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# AN OPEN DOOR FOR SINGERS

*HINTS TO VOCALISTS*

*By*

REINHOLD L. HERMAN

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## PREFATORY NOTE

Why am I writing these "hints"?

It is quite a number of years ago that a young lady was announced at my studio for the purpose of having her voice tested. Young? Somewhat out of her teens; fair presence, neatly dressed, but evidently belonging to a certain practical, well-established class of society from which my pupils generally did not come. The voice proved to be a good one. "Oh! yes, she had had some lessons." And arrangements were made. I knew from the outset that my sympathies would not exactly tally with those of the new pupil. But do I not consider it the *first* condition of all successful teaching that the teacher shall adapt himself to his pupil's level of thought before spurring him onward along the lines of his own hard-won experience? How shall a pupil, at the first arduous beginning, rise to a comprehension of the master's musical horizon, or even understand to a nicety the teacher's technical terms? So I did my best to meet my new pupil "on her level." A vain effort! I met—vacancy. A voice, an intelligence, but no apparent responsiveness. And yet she did what she was told. In the fourth or

fifth week, however, her attitude became more frigid, almost hostile. On the next occasion, things were executed with obedience, but evidently with an under-current of such silent disapprobation that I said at the end of the lesson: "My dear young lady, I cannot continue your instruction, if your attitude remains what it is now. Have I unwittingly done anything to offend you?—I am quite willing to explain. But I beg to be released from my engagement with you." "Ah, no! You have done nothing to offend me. *I want to sing.* I shall come for my next lesson." . . . and she walked out rather stiffly. When she appeared the next time, my mind had been made up. It was the same resentful vocalising, the same defiant interpretation of a classic air. I closed the piano—and the lesson. "But," I said, "I am not accustomed to have anyone leave my house in such a spirit, clearly labouring under a misapprehension. I will not accept any payment—you will never say that you have been a pupil of mine. But please tell me, have I hurt you in any way?" A cutting "No!"—then preparations for the departure. All at once she resolutely faced me, and said: "Well, if you *will* have it, I will tell you. I have studied for more than two years, and with more than one master. I have always had half-hour lessons. You give me full-hour

lessons. Always, in the middle of the half-hour lesson, I was so faint or dizzy that I had to hold on to a chair, sometimes I had to lie down . . . and with you, at the end of the full hour, I FEEL NOTHING!"

You think it a story from the Arabian Nights. I am perfectly able—a less amusing Scheherazade—to furnish the other thousand similar stories, for in one form or another the pupils had suffered from experiments too harmful and strange to have been the products of their own imagination.

I am writing these "hints" in order to prevent singers from doing the *unnatural*, from expecting the *supernatural*, from struggling to surpass personal, *unchangeable limitations* with the bitter sacrifice of years, health, money and voice.

I want to point out a *reasonable* way of looking at vocal attainments.

I should like to destroy the idea that *vocal methods* are mysterious, incomprehensible inventions. Not as a singing-master, but as a sensible looker-on who has lived with many nations, who has been intimate with some of the greatest artists, and has worked with professionals of all grades and with amateurs of all kinds, I want to be helpful by stating *errors* which are but too constant, and by opening doors at which



the bewildered student often knocks desperately and fruitlessly.

I want also—and the index will show it—to express certain *laws of style* and perplexing notation which I have found nowhere quite clearly given, though I have searched for them everywhere for the use of my own pupils.

I desire to contribute to a *wholesome tradition* of vocal art. While other authors have been scientific and theoretic, while some methods have even toyed with the dissecting knife, I shall look at things only from a musical point of view, rarely pretending to exhaust the subject, but to “talk helpfully about it.” Let me scatter the seed of thought. Others may reap a harvest therefrom by applying their intelligence and drawing their own conclusions. At some later opportunity I may find it necessary to take up, for exhaustive treatment, certain few important matters.

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## PART I: EXPLANATORY HINTS

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### CHAPTER I

#### **Introductory**

IN the art of singing, preëminently, the greatest artists were *creators*. They have solved for themselves (*i. e.*, for their individual voices *only*) the riddle. Almost all of them were “guided” at some brief period in their lives, but only they themselves worked out the wonderful problem which made them kings and queens of the earth. Yet, because with them the accomplishment was such an absolutely individual thing, few of them have been great teachers. *They remained a law unto themselves*—and frequently a law which, in its whole extent, would scarcely fit one voice out of a hundred, and even then only under exceptional circumstances. It is here that the sympathetic, yet clear-headed, the dispassionate, yet imaginative, “teacher” supplements them. He need not be one of the great singers, but he must be able to appreciate and explain (with all the limitations each great artist offers somewhere) the individual, divers excellences; to take these—and *not him-*

*self*—as the standard for purest, highest art, and to point out unerringly to less creative intelligences the road toward the ideal.

For every student, the road to travel lies along a different tract. One has even plains to walk over, another mountain ranges to conquer; the path of one seems level enough, until all at once he stands before yawning abysses and unbridged chasms; to one, the lands lie in open daylight; to the other, mists shroud most of the voyage. The *real* teacher (a thing as rare as the artist himself) must find a solution in all such individual difficulties, *if there be a possibility*. This, however, cannot be done without the pupil's active help. The teacher is the engineer, the student the workman. Do not throw the blame of non-accomplishment upon the engineer, when the workman has preferred to sit by the wayside, or when his muscles cannot bear the strain, or his head grows dizzy.

People always speak of "voice" only, in a singer. I must say at once that, in vocal art, the heart, the imagination, physical culture and æsthetic movement, the whole intelligence (musical and otherwise), should receive an awakening and an equal education—if you would form an "artist." But how many are thinking of that? Who will crowd such a task into two or three years' time?

## ABOUT THE LARYNX

Why are young singers persecuted nowadays with diagrams of their vocal apparatus, and with constant reference to the use of parts therein which they can no more control than the action of liver or kidneys? It is safe to state that the great, the immeasurably great singers of bygone times were never taught by the aid of scientific "plates." Garcia had not yet invented the laryngoscope. Everything about the voice was mystery and oral tradition; and yet people seem to have sung—beautifully.

When persons study the piano, the harp or the violin, are they continually reminded of the number of bones in their hands, of the sinews in their forearms, or of the muscles of their shoulders? Yet I venture to say that all these parts of the human body are infinitely more docile to control, always under more direct visual inspection, than any of the cartilages or ligaments belonging to the larynx proper.

The singer *should* know with precision how his larynx is made—what this organ consists of. He *should* appreciate its almost limitless elasticity and exquisite delicacy. He *should* be warned—one cannot warn enough and early enough—of the dangers of straining and of the mischief of wrong use . . .



*and then he should leave that knowledge of the physical construction of his inner throat severely alone.* For a long time it is the teacher's province to watch over the delicate changes in that organ.

Probably few young singers are aware that the sound-producing part of the throat, *i. e.*, the vocal cords, can accomplish only the following few things:

1. Attack a tone (properly or improperly) ;
2. Give to the tone a certain pitch (higher or lower) ;
3. Produce certain notes in different "registers" (of which more anon) ;
4. Support any given sound louder or softer at will (though most of this variation in "tone-power" should really be classed with the *breath*, *i. e.*, with the lungs).

The endless variety of tone-colour, the whole gamut of soul-moving expression, in fact the whole range of vocal dexterity and vocal achievement, lies in the use of *other* organs. Combined or singly, these have to be trained with quite as much attention as, and with even more care and sacrifice of time than, is generally given to those thoughtlessly overburdened vocal cords.

It cannot be repeated too often: *The student can do very little indeed* independently with these vocal

cords alone, compared to what he can accomplish with the help of the adjacent organs with regard to ease and effect in singing. Like a piece of material in a clever artisan's hands, that double set of fibrous, flexible muscles called the vocal cords may be smoothed out, strengthened, refined, rendered more pliable or resistant. But, *on the whole*, you cannot change the source of voice nature intended you to produce. Therein lies the simple fact, whether you "have a voice" (as the saying goes) or not. The vocal cords may fit each other ill; they may be uneven on their surfaces or at their edges. To a certain extent you can never remedy these or other original defects. Notes not intended by birthright to be "in your compass" you will never *own*, scarcely utter accidentally or temporarily. Therein lies the explanation, why we cannot *at will* make a tenor out of a bass, a *coloratura*-voice out of a dramatic one. Some voices intrinsically beautiful may never acquire even one single note beyond their first-established compass during years of study. One cannot add or stretch by straining—except to break. *Growth* proceeds in a different way.

For, in speaking thus, I do not for one instant mean to assert that a singer's range cannot be extended astonishingly; that whole octaves cannot be

"built on" to a voice originally a torso; that in certain cases the entire compass and quality may not undergo a complete transformation. In most of these exceptional and envied cases (which to hold up *as a rule and certainty* has ruined more voices than pen can tell) the power of producing those new notes was there, dormant, *at the beginning*. Only awkwardness, want of courage—ignorance, in short—prevented them from springing into existence. One can often tell exactly what tones, and of what quality, the pupil will produce in four or six months' time, and then *prove* it to the astonished student. Therein lies the *divining power* of the real voice-builder; he sees and knows the goal to which a voice is tending, much as a gardener can foretell, from a leaf or first shoot, what kind of blossom the plant will, nay, *must* bring forth under proper cultivation.

If a voice is changed from a disagreeable organ to smoothness and loveliness, this is, in almost all cases, the result of work with *other* organs which belong quite as much to "singing" as the often abused vocal cords. Work with these organs is infinitely less dangerous, less tiring, and distinctly more under power of observation. Here I shall insist on only two rules, which I should like to affix in big letters over the desk of every student:

- (1) *The throat never should ache while studying, or from study.*
- (2) *If there be several ways of producing a tone, or a phrase, always choose the one which feels PHYSICALLY the most comfortable.*

I must explain at length:

#### RULE I

We cannot continue *any* muscular exercise without tiring. Persisting, this fatigue increases gradually to soreness, and soon to a distinct physical pain. With careful training, much of this disappears, but *never* the natural claim of the body to *diversify* its movements.

If your throat aches, you may be sure that one of the four following things is the cause:

I. *Your "voice," your larynx, is not quite sound.*

You need rest or the physician. A larynx may appear strong, until put to the test of vocal practice. It need not be *wrong* singing that causes the discomfort; singing alone may develop the weakness or show the defect.

II. *You have been using your sound organ wrongly, i. e., you have been forcing or straining.*

Let your master see to that. For "singing

softly" does not in the least obviate that fault, since many voices sing their *p* infinitely worse than louder passages. With them "singing softly" means *suppressing the tone*, doing violence to it. It is *always* more difficult to form a flawless *piano* passage than to emit loud, powerful tones.

III. *You have been singing quite properly and with a sound organ, but (unconsciously) you may have been tired by too much previous exercise, by excitement, or perhaps by a bad night; your body may not furnish sufficient force for the "practising hour."*

Go, rest, and take your practice later with renewed strength. *No stimulants, pray.* For stimulants are quite as apt, for the moment, to impair the judgment as they are to do away with the temporary weakness of the body. Reserve those for the *very* rare moments when something serious is at stake, and when you need them absolutely.

IV. *You have been singing quite properly, with a sound organ, also in physically good condition. But you have been demanding from your voice what you heard other singers do after long years of hard professional work, after oft-repeated struggles with choruses and orchestras.*

You did not yet know, that *your own* vocal cords may still be like silken ribbons, while with older singers they have turned into bands of finest tempered steel, capable of infinite pressure and elasticity. Slowly, insensibly, *your* fibres also will strengthen. It is incredible what strain that small organ in its box, the larynx, can sustain in the way of tension and endurance; but if you *begin* by pushing and tearing, a baneful result is inevitable. Many voices "break down" (often only in part) long before their owners have reached the thirties. Once having passed that critical period, most people's throats, even in spite of a bad method, can endure startling efforts and constant abuse for a much longer period.

Please do not think you are ever called upon to imitate phenomenal voices. All phenomena are exceptions, whims or gifts of nature, never the reward or product of intelligent work.

There are persons who earn their bread and astonish the multitude by breaking stones with their fists. You can see women swung by their hair through the horror-stricken silence of a circus, while performing useless and inane tricks. Soprani exhibit themselves who sing Mascagni's Intermezzo, sometimes shrilly,

sometimes sweetly, in the otherwise impossible octave above the high soprano notes; tenors appear on the stage who torture your ear during an entire performance until they reach the clarion-like *C* or *C♯* for which *alone* they are engaged. Do not feel disgraced, if you cannot do likewise. Look at your natural limitations; try to overcome and to expand them. Within that circle of your individual qualities—useful and always at your command, *because* they are products of your physical self—try to do beautiful things beautifully, portray characteristic things with truth and refinement, execute music meant for mere display with ease and grace.

#### RULE 2

“If there be several ways of producing a tone, or a phrase, always choose the one which feels physically most comfortable.”

A pupil may object that by a change of “method,” *i. e.*, by being forbidden to emit his tones with undue help from certain muscles, his voice may appear much weaker than during faulty emission. Quite true. At the beginning, the new way may not be the most effective or expressive way. But a note produced with a strain, *i. e.*, an undue effort, will *never* improve in quality, will *never* permit free handling of tone-gra-

dation or diction, will *never* advance you one solitary step. In most cases it carries on its very surface an element more or less distasteful to the listener. What is produced with comparative comfort may be weak at the outset, but, like a healthy plant, will grow beyond all expectation, *always* allowing you unlimited freedom of tone-management.

*Power once gained is never lost* in a healthy organ. If your body by any effort could *wrongly* produce something effective, the same effort directed *rightly* will achieve a fourfold result. Certain muscles, in the beginning, are sluggish, and too weak to respond. Give them time to develop naturally, and, in the meantime, distinguish clearly between "effort" and "strain." An effort *may*, at times, be harmful, but in singing it should always be a delightful, inspiring sensation. The softest, sweetest floating head-tone of a soprano requires quite as much mental and physical effort as the loudest inartistic vociferation. *Every* well-directed tone, until a regular habit has been formed, is a constant intellectual effort. *Strain* is what I object to under all circumstances. Of course, slovenly singers never use any concentration, *i. e.*, any mental effort, and seem (to themselves) to sing endlessly without any physical effort at all—of course, without achieving anything.



## CHAPTER II

### **The Complex Vocal Apparatus**

THE student has three distinct parts to educate, three distinct DIVISIONS of his body to watch.

The first is his air-supply chamber: The lungs.

The second is the tone-producing apparatus:

The larynx imbedded in the throat.

The third is the tone-modifying chamber: The cavities of the nose and mouth with their respective movable parts and fixed teeth.

Their combination presents a bewildering mass of difficulties, if the majority of such parts prove stubborn and persist in interfering.

### **Division I: The Breath**

#### ANALYSIS OF BREATHING-METHODS

When undertaking to explain anything with regard to "breathing," I have to ask the reader's pardon if I go to some length in my explanations. The complexity of "breathing methods" has reached a point where simple statements are out of the question. Yet breathing is a vital point.

I say to my pupils: Walk with your feet, look with your eyes, digest with your stomach, *and breathe with your lungs.*

I do *not* say: Walk with your eyes, digest with your feet, look with your lungs, *and breathe with your stomach.*

Yet such is the state of perplexity now, that students are told to breathe with the abdomen, with the diaphragm, with their backs—with anything *except* their lungs! I have vainly tried to find a reason for such aberrations. I can surmise but two. First, the constant mistaking of cause and effect—or considering movements of the organs below the diaphragm, which ought to be the consequence of all natural breathing, as its primary cause. The order of things simply becomes inverted. Secondly, that all the “methods of breathing” have been invented and propagated by persons double and treble the age when vocal studies are supposed to be commenced. Any honest singer will concede that the body of the lithe eighteen-year-old girl is no more like that of the artist of forty or forty-five, than the pliant, tender spring-shoot of lilac or rose is like the hardened wood developed in time by nature to resist the force of the elements and the rigors of winter. A similar difference exists between the physique of a young col-

lege-student and the mature man of middle age. Some people may refuse to believe in these changes in nature. I say: It is certain that we are powerless to resist these fibrous and muscular alterations that come with age and professional occupation. In May, the shoots of vine or creeper snap like glass at a touch, and wither in the breath of a gale; after their change to woody fibre you can bend, twist, even use as a support those frail branches. In maturer years we carry heavier, less flexible abdomens, far more difficult to move by the rise and fall of the diaphragm than in the days when we were members of racing crews, or tossing the ball, or contesting among fleet-footed runners. If a singer's chest has broadened out into a capacious cavity, which would need no special enlargement—if a teacher of riper age finds it more natural to press his breath out by the force of his abdomen, or of any organ except his lungs, do not let him exact the same process of breathing from bodies as yet utterly unfit for such pressure. *I would counsel talking as little as possible about "breathing,"* at first, though breath is the first and paramount necessity for any tone-work. But as long as the student cannot *get rid* of his laboriously acquired "breath" in singing, as long as he cannot employ and distribute the painfully stored-up air, you make his body rigid and un-

elastic. To teach a pupil to educate his breath-capacity without any due proportion of tone-work seems to me like teaching some one to drive a nail, giving him hammer and nail but only *air* to hammer on; or to teach a person to plane a board, instructing him in detail in the motion of the tool, with never a board to work on. I have known a professor, in one of the greatest of contemporary schools for violin-playing, to instruct a boy in drawing his bow across the open violin-strings for seven months, without giving his fingers or his ears any relief from that single exercise. I have known singing-pupils who were kept on breathing-exercises for half a year and more without being permitted to sing more than an occasional scale, much less a word. I insist that breath-development should proceed parallel with tone-development. Whatever breath the tone requires should be forthcoming, and intelligently prepared. But to develop a breath which might do for Brangäne's night-song or Händel's "Let the bright Seraphim," before the pupil can manage the simplest *portamenti* (tone-connections), seems an utter waste of time and strength. For only *the just proportion* between sound and air-supply makes the tone beautiful. Too much air is quite as harmful as too little.

As to breathing: Stand upright—easily, not stiffly.

Treat the chest like a large, elastic basket. Learn to make your ribs expand and contract, rise and fall horizontally, *quite irrespective of drawing breath*, until you can do so *while talking*. Nature abhors a vacuum. By expanding your ribs you also expand your lungs, and air rushes in by itself. The softer parts below the ribs are drawn inward and upward by this process, returning to their position without any thought of your own when the breath-chamber, *i. e.*, the chest, is empty. In young, flexible bodies that "disappearance of the stomach" is most pronounced; in older singers the development of the tissues near the diaphragm decreases elasticity. Power and stability then take the place of grace and variability.

It seems to me dangerous to teach only the "drawing in of breath." Breathing in this fashion *alone* is tiring and insufficient; it will produce, at times, noises, dryness and irritation of the throat. *Combined* with the breath taken by rib-expansion, you can, as it were, *condense* the air in your lung-cells by taking one breath "on top of the other." You breathe first with the lower portion of your chest and then, without exhaling this first air, you expand the small upper ribs also—*without ever lifting your shoulders*.

For an unusual effort needed for long phrases, these "double breaths" are invaluable; but one should

have learnt meanwhile to regulate wisely this quantity of compressed air.

I remember in a well-known studio an apparatus which was placed around the chest of the pupil, and which set an electric bell in motion as soon as the prescribed chest-expansion fell below the normal. Energetic attention to breath-expansion was thus maintained, but the resultant rigidity inevitably became harmful. The fundamental principles always to be observed are *perfect elasticity of body*, and a *just proportion* of air-supply to tone-emission. The chest should always be kept expanded, yet not to an absurd extent. Let a pupil (not before he has begun to "hear," however) utter a tone simply, then repeat it with inflated lungs. He will perceive at once how, without any increase of power, the sound becomes richer and fuller. The air in the lungs seems to act, not only as a tone-producer, but equally as a resonator, while all the muscles of the throat are held, by expansion of the chest, in a more "energetic" position.

Occasionally, but very rarely, one finds a pupil with *too much* breath, *i. e.*, one who can sing two or three phrases, where even the best singers can make their breath last for only one. Such pupils belong to the class of phenomena, and offer no guide for others,

because people's breath-powers are as individual as their voices. I repeat: Breathe as *naturally*, i. e., as quietly, and as *far down* as you can. From month to month you will find your capacity for holding and managing the breath grow. Avoid being an imitator of those who say, "Oh! my teacher makes me lie down flat on a mattress for breathing-exercises." Or, "I have to bend forward over the back of a chair; then, *to strengthen the diaphragmatic portion* (!), on straightening myself for singing I must force the chair forward by the impulse of the abdominal muscles." Or, "My diaphragm *must do it all*. I am never permitted to sing a note when my chest shows the slightest expansion."

One word still about "breathing through the nose." If students had not come to me repeatedly with this "injunction" from their teachers, I should never have believed that it could be taught seriously to singers, for their singing. Yes, we *are* to breathe in sleeping and waking *through the nostrils only*—but not in violent exercise and not in singing. Take in your breath slowly through the nose, before you begin. After that *never again*, except during long rests or interludes. If you shut your mouth entirely between phrases (a rather obligatory performance for most people, if they want to be sure of breathing through

the nostrils *only*), you shut off the exquisite resonance of the ending phrase as you would stop the vibration of a ringing glass by touching it. But you would have to have the nostrils of a horse to draw in *through the nose* a sufficient quantity of air during an eighth-rest or quarter-rest. In most cases the composer does not give you even so much time. You have to "steal" it somewhere, without written rests. Some teachers even say: You have to move and inflate your nostrils during the breathing process. Yes, I know noses so exquisitely modelled, with ligaments so fine and cartilages so translucent, that their nostrils move with the slightest emotion and the slenderest effort. But the vast majority of noses are fashioned of thicker and less flexible substance. The above is purely individual; superfluous and out of place as a general recommendation. Nature has created the nasal passages so narrow *precisely because* she intended to have the air warmed and purified by allowing only small quantities to descend gradually into the lungs. You can warm and purify the air in the nasal passages—*but not* during singing. It is on account of the impossibility of "breathing through the nose only" that one should warn against practising in badly heated rooms, for voices are often lost by being forced to sing in vitiated air. It should be a self-evident proposition,



that no person who cares for the health of his voice should sing in chilly or "stuffy" rooms.

ABOUT SINGING AND EATING IN RELATION TO  
BREATH

Wanting to sit down to a *meal* presupposes an arrangement in life, when four, five or six hours have passed without the system receiving food. Your vitality is then at a somewhat low ebb. Your muscles are not fully fortified. You are, perhaps without appreciating it, in that state in which you see a flower before it is watered. One needs, therefore, a greater physical effort to spur this tired machinery to the intended effect. You have to *push* your breath. It may do no harm, just for once; but as a habit, I would warn against singing at such a time.

Singing after a meal is still worse. Not only are the tone-passages not perfectly clean, but digestion requires all the blood-supply the body can spare. The stomach has grown much heavier, and impedes the inflation as well as the resonance of the lungs. Chief of all, the breathing-machinery has now to drag so much heavier a weight out of place and into place. Breathing (as a singer should breathe) becomes an effort. Last, but not least (I may add here), the wings of fancy and imagination are least buoyant at

such an hour. That there have been, and are, artists who profess to sing best in the midst of heavy libations or after inordinate eating, disproves nothing; they are exceptions and anomalies.

As long as you will accept as a law that, for singing, the lungs should be fed constantly and judiciously with air in its purest state; that they should never be overtaxed, but that their utmost cells should be filled with life-giving substance *for proper tone-service*; so long it will be a foregone conclusion, that the combination of breathing and singing is medicine and tonic for the constitution. It cannot be sufficiently recommended as a health-preserving exercise.

## Division II: The Larynx

### ATTACK OF THE TONE

The chapter on the "attack of the tone" leads us into the secret forge, whence gold is forthcoming—or base metal. A great singer has said: "Before uttering a note, my muscles all stand ready for its production. I sing that tone silently long ere it passes my mouth."

The truth has never been expressed more clearly. *Think before singing*, that is the secret. Otherwise

you will never have a well-poised note at your command.

Almost all our muscles act properly as soon as—and *if but*—the brain sends out the clear, *precise* order. Our mouth opens for food. Our knees bend for sitting down. Our fingers close to catch an object. Our eyelids rise so that we may see. Why should the throat alone refuse to “fly into position” when a certain note or a certain kind of utterance is commanded by the brain?

The “attack of a tone” can be threefold. If you swing your vocal cords into place *with* the note, the beginning of such a tone will be mostly below the intended pitch, like a *shadow* preceding the note desired.



would sound somewhat like



Uncertainty as to the exact pitch of the tone, or laziness in the play of vocal muscles, is at the bottom of this irritating habit. The singer should be like a good shot, aiming at his note precisely, before striking

it—not like a zither-player, sliding into his melody from interval to interval.

Neither should the note be ejected *explosively*, to avoid the above frequent fault. You would escape Scylla to encounter Charybdis. Here we arrive at the much-discussed stroke of the glottis (“coup de glotte”), *i. e.*, when the tone originates with a more or less hard stroke, or whack, no matter what quality the tone is supposed to possess *after* the hard attack. To me it is the most unbeautiful way of tone-production imaginable. I can liken it only to somebody’s *playing the piano with thimbles*. But, apart from the ugliness (which might be a debatable point), what danger! There are those two delicate vocal cords pressed together and torn apart to give the effect of a “stroke.” Does anyone suppose such a habit can be imposed upon the larynx without congesting the cords, causing soreness or excrescences?

Anybody may have ten fingers and a piano; but does not all the difference in pianistic accomplishment reside in the “touch”? Yet infinitely more important is the attack of tone to the singer, than touch to the pianist.

To put a clear explanation of tone-colour on paper is almost an impossibility. One tone sung rightly is worth ten pages of print. I would say, however, that

a tone must appear instantaneously, absolute in pitch and purity, yet the actual instant of its birth should always be shrouded in some mysterious softness. The tone should be perceived like that of a bell, of which one does not hear the clapper; like a bird-call; even somewhat like the ethereal birth of a tone when one rubs a glass. This infinite softness (which often lasts but an infinitesimal instant) should remain an inherent quality of the tone-commencement, even when the sound required is loud and sudden. It should go with the vowel-attack like the skin of a peach with the fruit itself, and should always precede the tone like the thinnest possible rubber covering on a ball of hard substance, even in the moments of greatest harshness or power.

The same (infinitesimal) softness has to be placed later between *consonant* and *vowel*. The Italian calls the northern consonants barbaric. He is right, when care is not taken to introduce the tone in spite of, and after, such consonants with the same mellifluous ease as if the consonants had no existence. I call this interposed medium an "air-cushion," which, however, *must never degenerate* into an aspiration or an *h* which would *sever* the tone from the consonant. It will save the voice wonderfully to interpose this delicate "air-cushion." If once in a while the expression de-

mand its suppression, the effect will be the more telling.

To teach what I consider the proper "attack," I have found no way quicker and surer than the following:

Choose a tone *absolutely easy* for the student.

Let him, or her, sing on one long breath (without breathing between the several emissions of the tone), separating the sounds as many times as his, or her, breath will *easily* permit:



Any easy vowel should thus be tried on any easy tone.

At first not one single attack may be right, but after a very few attempts a proportion will establish itself between the air-supply and the effort of tone-emission. Soon a *few* attacks will succeed—here and there. Gradually, with close attention, more and more notes will attain this "floating, bell-like" attack. Some pupils find *A* the easier vowel, some *E*.\* (Let it be mentioned here, that people with a naturally good *A* rarely pronounce *I* and *E* well in sing-

\*The vowels are always to be pronounced as in Italian, German or French.

ing, and *vice versa*. *Be satisfied*, if you can establish *one* vowel freely at the outset.) Soon you can mingle different vowels:



always keeping in mind the long breath.

Experience will dictate what changes to suggest. In the meantime you may have proceeded to something like



etc., and



always using the *detached* notes.

In practising, *vary* your exercises, for it is decidedly tiring to be kept singing in the compass of a very few notes.

The case is rare in which the proper attack of the tone cannot be speedily established in this wise through almost the entire range. *For now the pupil has felt what is easy emission and what is faulty con-*

*traction.* An occasional reminder will suffice to keep the old habit under control.

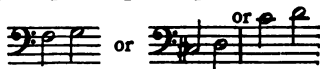
*Never overdo one special exercise, especially with young voices.*

### ABOUT REGISTERS

Words often disguise ideas, instead of explaining them. For instance, I have heard singing-teachers designate by *falsestto* the most widely dissimilar actions of the throat in men and in women, thereby throwing pupils or readers into hopeless confusion. To explain: By having "registers" I mean the power to produce *in certain parts* of the vocal scale certain notes in different, but perfectly legitimate, ways. Take the following as a crude example: A boy has a voice extending from



When his period of mutation sets in, some low rough notes suddenly appear, perhaps



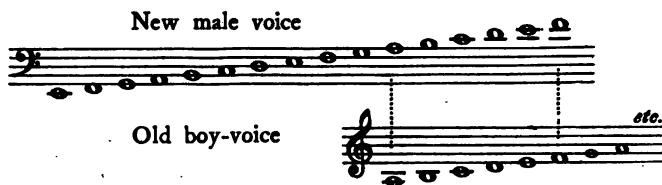
singly or in small groups, and gradually gaining in certainty and power. The scale enlarges to





and deepens still more in the succeeding months. In the meantime, the muscles of the larynx having undergone a change, the former boy-voice has grown diaphanous and hollow; then has shrunk away from the top until perhaps a series of six, eight, or ten rather feeble notes of most indifferent quality remain. This weak remnant of the boyish organ which lies, in part, above the new manly voice (chest-voice), but also "crosses it"—extends over it—for a number of notes downward, bears in *my* nomenclature the name of "falsetto." "Falso" expresses, in its original Italian meaning, the idea of "not right" (*i. e.*, wrong); "falsetto," consequently, something "not quite right" (*i. e.*, somewhat wrong), clearly indicating the preference for the strong, deeper voice in contradistinction to the less effective and less comfortable "higher register." Perhaps "falsetto" also implies, in its Italian meaning, the "mimicry of the feminine;" but how it ever came to be made to express, in some "methods," any natural and legitimate part of the female voice, is a perversion difficult to understand.

The above-mentioned (quite dissimilar) voices *overlap* each other in the following manner:



The power to produce *at will* the notes between



in two different ways I call "*having registers*"—registers in their very *crudest* state.

(There are people who call one set of notes simply "wrong." To my mind, the appellation in no wise alters the fact, that the same note can be produced in two different ways. And we shall see, that here a *third way* is likewise *possible*.)

For simplicity's sake let us assume that the "chest-voice" (for so we now call the grown man's voice, and likewise the lowest portion of the full-grown woman's vocal organ) is produced by the vibrations of the *entire vocal cords*. These vibrations eventually continue, or seem to continue, where the vocal cords are attached, *i. e.*, along the sides of the voice-chamber and downward, the air-column within the

chest likewise receiving a vibratory impetus, and producing the feeling that the chest participates in the origin of the tone. Hence the denomination "chest-voice." In like manner let us take it for granted that head-tones—the "falsetto" in male voices—move only the *inner edge* of the same cords. The breath, encountering no resistance, rushes through the opening into the nasal cavities, thus placing all sensation in the head.

Experienced male singers know how much more breath is "lost" in singing such head-tones than is needed for producing the many times stronger, but resistant, chest-tones. If one blows one's breath out hard enough upon a falsetto tone, the sound is apt to flutter away as if the vocal cords were just so much paper—the essence of the falsetto seeming to be *air*. If one forces a chest-note, the larynx seems rather to contract; the tone ultimately snaps—breaks from strain of tension; the essence of the chest-voice seems to be *muscle*.

The above mental picture will make clear, how decreasing the vibrating surface (from the entire cord to its inner edge) would make the voice "run from a chest-tone to a falsetto-tone," and *vice versa*. If such a movement be not exquisitely gradual, but intercepted in never so small a degree, a "step," or "break," will be heard . . . and felt. From a purely mechanical point of view anyone might appreciate the difficulty of connecting, taking up and releasing, in turn, the infinitely varied sets of delicate fibres which

go to the making of a tone. With organs of average quality, this is one of the greatest difficulties to conquer—a constant life-work.

It is an easy conclusion, that you may begin a note in one "register" and change, *on the same note*, to the other "register." Also, you may take one note in the lower, the other tone in the higher register. To stubborn throats such a change seems impossible at times (after a while certain low voices lose, together with the flexibility of their vocal bands, the power of producing any "falsetto" sounds); but the familiar phenomenon known as "yodeling" consists in nothing but accentuating (in man or woman) the change from one "register" to another.

Of course, here comes the counter-assertion, that within the once fully developed voice no more registers should exist; that a voice having such "unnatural divisions" is to be considered a bad, impossible one, and that the distinct changes of the organ are only the result of faulty singing.

There are people who paint, though colour-blind. There are people without the gift of "hearing," who teach singing. Really, I do not see why either of these two classes should continue their occupation. The teacher who cannot distinguish between a chest-tone of his pupil and her middle voice, may be a

splendid instructor of elocution, but he has no business to teach "voice-quality";—just as there are teachers with exquisite "tone-sense" who cannot be authorities in interpretation. The master, in whose throat the very manner in which his pupil drops from a floating head-tone to a thrilling chest-note does not find a responsive echo by setting a similar set of muscles in vibration, had better confine himself to teaching phrasing, breathing and style. The *real* vocal master feels his own throat ache with every strained tone of his pupil; every glorious swelling note of the young voice expands his lungs or his larynx delightfully; his throat, all through the lesson, is like the mute mirror of the pupil who stands before him. And therefore it is no sinecure, this "teaching." It requires the greatest amount of sympathy, comprehension, inventiveness and mental subtlety. Passion and fancy must be ready at will; tears and laughter, despair and exaltation, must gush forth from the teacher's soul, not only in sufficient quantity for himself, but in superabundance—like a flood to carry with him the rigid, often stolidly unimaginative, "un-daring" pupil. The singing-master has to listen to quality, to pitch, to diction, to every technical detail. And *besides that*, he has to live in his lessons every day through the whole gamut of the deepest human passions and the most

exalting, yet also the most heart-rending, sensations. What is the work of a teacher of the piano, the violin, or the organ, compared to the emotional, exhausting occupation of a guide through the literature of song and opera?

It is also stated that the development of certain "register-like" sets of tones is the result of "using that part of the voice for speech unduly and faultily." As an answer I can only point to the fact that some contralti, renowned all over the United States, artists of the highest rank, *never* spoke in their magnificent chest-register. And many high florid soprani speak habitually in their lowest register, which, if ever employed in song, sounds dry and unattractive, causing you the greatest surprises. No! these fundamental differences exist as a natural condition; and one may take it as a law that the rugged and powerful male (chest-) voice goes with a rather useless, weak falsetto, and that the more beautiful and resonant the male falsetto, the less force and virility exists in the same voice throughout the compass of chest-notes. I leave it to scientists to explain the phenomenon, though the thicker or finer texture of the vocal cords might give an easy explanation. That fundamental difference *remains for ever* part and parcel of the individual voice. Sometimes—rather rarely—nature

has provided a smooth way of gradually passing from one kind of motion to the other, *i. e.*, without a "break." Generally, a diminishing of the tone in this manner is much more easily established than an increase of the tone.

It takes severe application and *very* careful study to acquire even a fairly secure "bridging over" from register to register. One of the most famous of singing-masters has written: "Break as often as you can from one register into another. You will wear the edges gradually away, and soon the 'smooth bridging over' will be established." It is my opinion that by so doing you will break your voice sooner than accomplish any favourable result. Practising such changes fatigues the throat more than is usually thought. *Elasticity* of muscle, which lies at the bottom of final accomplishment, is a thing not to be acquired *by will* or *forcing*. I cannot repeat too frequently that energy alone, *i. e.*, too much determined practising, will rarely lead to elasticity. Much intelligent change in exercising, much trying of divers ways until you have found what exactly fits your case, judicious "relaxation" instead of effort, will help the union of registers. One student may get it on the vowel *i*; another first on *a* or *u*; one pupil on a higher tone, another in the middle notes. *There is no law*

for it. You will have to *think*, and try to establish the "bridge" *only* where you seem safe from surprises, *i. e.*, breaks. Later, you may widen the bridge, *i. e.*, extend the "manner once acquired" to other intervals, until you have reached the "possible"—which is not always the "desirable." For nature does not create every organ in, or for, perfection.

While working thus, you will soon perceive that, *if* you succeed in uniting the two different registers, you do so only by passing a point—a *neutral* point—which is neither chest nor falsetto in the male voice, neither chest-note nor medium in the female voice. Both here seem to join hands, the tone for the moment partaking of the nature of either extreme.\* At first, this bridge between two different kinds of tones—of

\*To explain: Suppose you have a pencil:



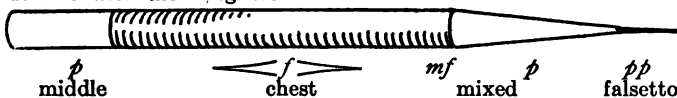
If you want to give it a point to write with, you do not sharpen it thus:



You give it a slant to support the fragile point of lead,



thus making a serviceable pencil in three divisions. Men should do this with their highest notes



when swelling into a tone and finishing it with the utmost sweetness.



“registers”—may appear as an accident—for a moment. After some time you can fix it, repeat it, then prolong it. Soon you can inspect its “making,” its quality, finding that it lends itself admirably to tapering off big notes, also for sustaining soft passages and for producing effects of remoteness and echo.

Happy the singer to whom nature has given this means of expression as a birthright! The voice to which this means of tone-gradation is denied, will have to eliminate certain branches of literature from its programme as an inevitable consequence.

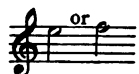
Many years ago, when the first opportunities for working with injured or diseased voices were afforded me, I was struck by the fact that certain imperfections always extended over a certain series of notes. Excellences as well as weaknesses existed in “groups,” and a keen hearing would detect even in a healthier organ those more or less slight changes of tone-production with a certain unmistakable regularity. It seemed always from about *F* to *C*, and from *C* to *F*, that the similarities continued. The limits of this grouping were not marked with mathematical precision, but in the space of “about a fourth” a turning-point was reached, where the vocal quality underwent a change.


It is *not* the “directing breath or resonance” to a

slightly different focus which, in my experience, constitutes the "register," but the employment, for each group of notes, of slightly different muscles, or of the same muscles in a different way. When a vocalist is unable to prolong a note, that is, "*when the tone breaks*," it is not because the tone is "badly focused," but because wrong muscles are unduly drawn into movement, cartilages are stretched which cannot hold. The breath, the concentration of resonance, has *nothing at all* to do with the "breaking." By driving (directing) the tone to a different focus of resonance, you often *release* certain muscles which were ready to snap or to give way—which means simply that by employing the proper resonance you are liable to use *other* muscles better adapted for producing the desired tone. That the focus of resonance becomes displaced, may be a consequence, but cannot be the sole origin (as is claimed) of such widely divergent qualities of sound. Surely, the thing which ruins so many voices consists *precisely* in trying to continue singing *in the same manner* across the entire range, whereas the mode of production should constantly change *so as to produce the effect of absolute evenness*.


(The danger, of course, is far greater in forcing the upper notes with the same mechanism as the lower ones, than in relaxing the throat too much for the

deeper sounds.) Only to create certain startling effects of force, of contrast, of echo or of weirdness, the "register" occasionally is used in its unadulterated character. The singer must be able to smooth all transitions, to spread the same colour over the entire scales in *f* and in *p*. The artist—as we shall see later—must hypnotise the hearer into the belief that a vowel is continued *pure*, when approaching



the vowel undergoes an *absolute* change; equally so, in female voices, while descending heavily upon  and the still lower notes.

Recognising the limit for resonance in larger places (halls, opera houses), composers scarcely ever write

for the solo female voice below . The


part of Fides in Meyerbeer's *Prophète* is one of the few (in this case most cleverly managed) exceptions.

#### MALE VOICES


Modern literature and modern sentiment unite to eliminate, as much as possible, the use of the "falsetto" in its pure form. Occasionally it is used for


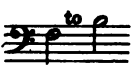
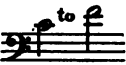
ludicrous effects in single notes. It does not seem necessary, therefore, to draw the falsetto into renewed discussion. It should be trained in tenor voices, to relieve the voice during practice and for the creation of a perfect "mixed voice." For the rest, individual tendencies may dictate. The remaining compass of the male voice offers no violent contrasts, and its almost imperceptible subdivisions become apparent only in a more or less diseased state with which we have little concern here. Moreover, the male voice, as a *body of sound*, is mostly *given* by nature. The cases when a weak voice has grown into a brilliant, powerful organ can be counted rarities. With the female voice, *anything* seems to be possible. I have constantly seen the most hopeless voices rival, in the end, organs destined from the beginning to exceptional careers.


It is, however, an acknowledged fact that the tenor


voice loses its resonance below  (I am using



the established *wrong* notation for the tenors, for the note sung by them sounds "an octave lower," like

 ), and that it ceases its utility before reach-

ing  . From  all men's voices call for no special remark. Suddenly, on C, upward from , the inevitable great difficulty

occurs for almost all basses and baritones, "how to modify and to modulate these upper tones;" to make them useful, beautiful, and *secure* in all their degrees of strength. Here lies *the dangerous register*. The tenor, however, calmly continues on his upward way. That intermediate register has no terrors for him. But nature insists upon her rights. Just before he comes to the next *F*  his trouble begins. If

he does not do there what the lower male voices had to do "one register lower" (*i. e.*, on ) , he will soon come to grief in some manner.

To the new mode of singing those upper notes ( for the bass-baritones, and  for the tenors) we have given the term of "*covering the tone*"; which means that, instead of opening the

throat wide and wider for each higher note (as the strain intensifies), we gradually drop some of the elastic muscles of the soft palate. They now *enfold* the tone, make it elastic, and prevent the larynx from rising inordinately. The vowels all change in consequence. They become, as we express it, "*darker*." The tone thus remains manageable. The art consists in *not* making the change apparent, but in creating an apparently unbroken continuity of tone-colour. In reality, the change is *enormous* and *vital*. The entire "instrument" is altered in shape. Should you keep on singing exactly as you did on the lower notes, you would soon discover that unlovely, strained sounds would result.

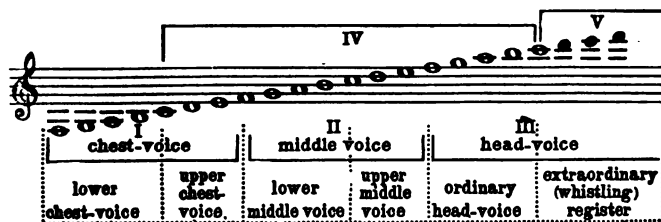
Join to the above what I have said about "the mixed voice," on page 34, and you have the fundamental, never-ending difficulty of male singers, which nature spares to but very few.

#### FEMALE VOICES AND THEIR SUBDIVISIONS

The flower-plant is perfect only in the combination of (1) root, (2) stalk with leaves (or leaves only), and (3) blossom. And so the most perfect voice of woman embodies the three colourings (or subdivisions) of chest-voice, medium and head-tones. There are plants in which one of the components

aforesaid is, or seems to be, lacking. So, in voices, one part may not exist at all, or only in a rudimentary stage. A less poetic simile might be that of a house which, to appear well-built and pleasing to the eye, is supposed to consist of (1) basement (cellar), (2) walls (stories), and (3) a roof to crown it.

Below is an illustration of the average well-developed female voice (which includes, of course, the intermediate intervals) :



Divisions I and II belong to the Contralto voice, for which, in operatic work, part of III is likewise a necessity. The *compass* thus resembles that of the Mezzo-Soprano, but the *quality* remains Contralto, the difference being desirable to serve as contrast to the soprano voice.

Division IV represents the compass of the Sopranos. These possessing the widest vocal range, by reason of their wonderfully elastic vocal cords, they also descend occasionally to the lower chest-sounds.

The small upper notes marked V in the diagram belong to anomalous voices, or are the special property of *coloratura* singers. Young people often possess these very high notes *for a while*, but lose them after a few years, when their entire body strengthens its muscular fibre. Moreover, these sounds are "given." The arrangement of their production in the throat is such that you cannot improve or change them much—scarcely decrease or increase them, as a rule. Only by modifying the shape of the mouth you may render them slightly variable.

#### LOW NOTES

Like these fairy-like, brilliant, or sharp upper notes without any real "body," the series of *lowest* notes in a voice, whether bass or contralto, is likewise a *gift* and a *condition* from the outset. They can rarely be created or cultivated. I do not mean thereby that you cannot "add," often as a surprise, a whole set of chest-notes to a soprano-voice which was tapering

off in faint middle tones about



. Such notes lay dormant from the outset, and, if the first note be but clearly established, in a lesson or two they are generally acquired as a "set." The strength of



the lowest register rarely improves except by age, *i. e.*, with the maturing of the body. I have found a low register gain very much, when through injury to the vocal organ (by strain or illness) some higher portion was lost. But, given a normal growth of the voice, a development *downward* is exceedingly rare, almost anomalous.

I think a not very learned but perfectly rational explanation may be the following: Low notes are supposed, or ascertained, to be sung with *relaxed* vocal cords, while the higher the note, the greater their tension and the more numerous the vibrations. Now, beyond a certain point we cannot "relax," for doing so to excess would render it impossible to set the cords in motion for "tones." On the contrary, we learn to do all movements with more agility, quicker, when more pressure is involved; that is the law of study, of development (except in a few athletic exercises or the famous "slow step" of the German recruit), and therefrom results the acquisition of more powerful and more acute sounds.

Within the bounds of the three octaves marked above lie all sorts of voices: Dramatic soprani and lyric ones; the "soubrette soprano" (the rather colourless half-lyric, half-*coloratura* voice of small power, but often of astonishing grace, brightness, at-

tractiveness and especial facility of diction) ; the mezzo-soprano, sometimes just a nondescript torso of a soprano, sometimes a luscious organ with the qualities of both soprano and contralto intermingled. There is the mezzo-contralto, and quite a varied set of voices belonging, in part, to one class or the other, sometimes changing from week to week in certain qualities.


I have heard pupils laugh at their teachers for "not knowing what their voice should be called," or because one teacher designated a voice as a Mezzo, the other as a Soprano. They should have laughed at nature, or at themselves. Some voices *are* neither one nor the other. *We* may be wrong in trying to "classify" voices at all; but certainly some organs, even good ones, are neither fish nor flesh, and the despair of the teacher. They may have the compass of one kind, and the quality of the other; they may begin in one denomination, and abruptly terminate at its opposite.

*To judge by compass* is often the worst thing one can do. And yet that proceeding seems to be the general rule! I have heard many a baritone whose compass exceeded by two or three notes a low tenor's range; *but he could not sustain these repeated phrases*. Many a contralto can reach heights quite impracticable to an ordinary soprano, but the strain of *con-*

*tinuation* would soon produce a painful impression. A soprano may have thin upper notes and a rich low range. Yet, were she to persist in singing on the lower notes, her voice would grow rough or fatigued. Not where you can *reach*, but where you can *dwell* with ease and comfort, shows the level and indicates the classification of your voice. Of course, until one has learnt to open one's throat properly, one cannot be sure of anything. But, the strain once taken off, the above rule holds good infallibly.

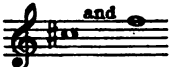
In former times (compare the Händel oratorios, or Bach, or all the earlier operas) composers wrote for squarely determined voices. All tenors and sopranis were expected to sing very high, basses and contraltis had their fixed, limited range. Mendelssohn began, with *Elijah*, the reign of the oratorio baritone. Only in modern times has the stupendous development of song-literature given to the other kinds of voices "a right to exist"—and they are making brave use of it.



There are contraltis without chest-voices. Several of the most beautiful (amateur) voices I have ever encountered had gorgeous, rich, middle-tones away

down to  . But nature demands law and limitation *somewhere*. As an offset, their rare chest-

notes in the same range were such imperfect things that they could never have been utilised. I would state it as a law: Exactly as it was with the tenor, whose over-developed "falsetto" signified from the outset a chest-voice of but medium power, so a very superb low "middle register" in a woman implies a less attractive chest-register. If nature gives one thing, she withholds the other—phenomena always excepted.

Observation 1. I add an ordinary example of how a voice may be misjudged; the pupil, with her individual wishes, being certainly at the bottom of the mischief. A young lady was brought to me, an American: "She had studied at Stuttgart for some years—Elsa, Senta, Santuzza, etc." I found the voice decidedly good, though slightly veiled, and a con-

stant variation from pitch between  indicated a "strain." No chest-notes to speak of; the compass reached

. The half-tone  higher was already risky. After

a few lessons I changed tactics, and before two months were over, the "lyric soprano" had changed, to the amazement—I do not say to the pleasure—of the young singer to an unusual *coloratura* voice. After four or five months no more trace of false singing; her timbre exquisite as "soie changeante"; her chromatic scales and cadences ripples of silvery lace-work and dazzling fireworks. She came to Europe, and had almost at once the offer of a début "in the autumn" at a Hoftheater . . . for *coloratura* parts. In the meantime,

for her répertoire she had to go—she chose her own teacher—to a once world-famous *coloratura* prima donna, now a teacher of repute, who promptly made her sing Elisabeth and Sieglinde again. There was *no* début at the Hoftheater, and alas! only a broken, tired voice at the end of the next season—and a cruel end to a hopeful career.

Observation 2. As to what pupils can judge or desire to do.—In a smallish male club I conducted for a time, there was among the first tenors a gentleman from whom I scarcely ever heard a sound. One day he came to me “for lessons.” Trying his voice, I elicited no promise of a satisfactory voice until I began trying his voice at the opposite end, in the range of the second basses. The result was: I found a truly excellent *bass-baritone* in that same throat. I gave him my frank opinion. Arrangements were made. The next day brought a letter of regret: “His constitution would not permit him to sing bass.” I suppose the throat-physician had a patient for life.

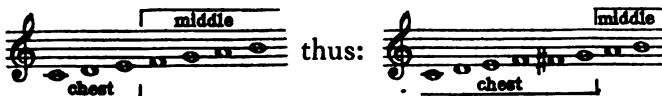
It should not be said that teachers are always at fault when even healthy voices “give out.” To use one’s voice *professionally* requires a physical endurance, a *staying power* of the vocal organ, which cannot be guaranteed at the outset. One may have a very sound heart, and yet not enough strength in that organ to run races. One may have ankles and feet strong enough to carry the individual through all the business of his life, yet not enough to turn athlete.

Do not blame your throat, and still less your master, if you find that you can keep only to song-litera-

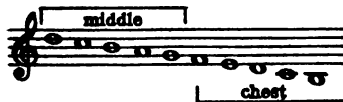
ture or to placid sacred music, *i. e.*, if your throat compels you to renounce an operatic career.

#### DANGERS OF REGISTERS

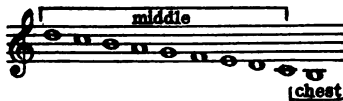
“Registers” have the power, and a *tendency*, to overstep their limits. For example, the upper-chest-voice sometimes appears, instead of this way:



Or the middle voice sings, instead of



in the following manner:



They *should* overlap.—But how?—Certainly there is no novelty in the assertion. When you ascend from lower notes, the *lower* register tries to rise. When you descend the scale, the *upper* register invades the domain of the lower register for a note or two. We shall also plainly see the same tendency between middle and head-notes.

Three important observations I would make here:

1. In ascending, always change your lower register

before you are compelled to. Never carry it to its last limit, as long as evenness is your objective point.\*


2. Widely different registers (different in production and *quality*), such as medium and chest-voice, chest-register and falsetto, can never be joined smoothly, when singing loud and rapidly.†

You need an instant's softening or retarding to bring the complex apparatus for "bridging" into proper position—*always*.

3. When going up, it is safe to carry the lower register *nearly* to its limit (not *up* to its limit). When going down, always carry the upper register *below* its ordinary limit:



\*The two perilous phrases in Meyerbeer's "Ah! mon

fiis," where  $F\sharp$   is either to be taken in middle

voice, and then *ineffectively*, or *effectively* in chest-voice, but at the risk of dragging the latter dangerously near the limit of its capacity, form an awful problem for every Fides.

†I do not speak of unusual voices, for *some* of them do escape that difficulty.

Explanation.—The highest note of each register is naturally uttered with more tension than its lower steps. Tension always implies stiffness. Therefore, it is more difficult to join two extremities. *Bridge* where the tones are yielding, *i. e.*, still in your power to modify them.

#### MIDDLE NOTES

The sounds whence the real tenor draws his most telling and legitimate effects—those upward from  $E^1$ — $F^1$ ,  $G^1$ ,  $A^1$ ,  $Bb^1$ —are identical (having the same number of vibrations, but far less intensity) with the “lower middle register” of the female voice. It makes up for the deficiency in power—*very* rarely is it the best part of a contralto voice—by being able to extend *downward* and to interchange in the most useful and interesting manner with the chest-voice. From the play of these two “sound-emissions” a singer can draw her most varied and artistic effects. It is here, in the presence of the greatest difficulty, that the greatest ingenuity finds scope for display. Here one can disguise natural shortcomings, exaggerate effects of contrast, have a marvellously easy field for diction. Yet *single* tonal effects of power, of swelling, are most limited on these middle tones.

The female voice requires, moreover, about *one-*



*third more breath* here than anywhere else. Pupils will often find that otherwise impossible phrases suddenly become easy through the introduction of one single chest-note in such a group. Good management of breath is a principal requirement. Arrange your phrasing from this twofold point of view; first, that you should never strain for power on those notes; second, that you will always need more breath here than on chest-tones or in the higher register; and you will be quite safe.

It happens that composers place some grand vocal effect, some inevitable climax, on precisely those notes. *Please correct those composers.* They acted and wrote in ignorance, demanding from an instrument tension and power where it cannot exist. They ask the impossible. Therefore, make your "point" elsewhere, on some *other* word. Or change the expression from force to subtlety, from fierceness to cunning, from power to tenderness. Or give preëminence to the *word*, sacrificing the *tone* to the consonant. You will thus produce an equal or better effect in a quite legitimate manner.

I have often found this register almost spoiled (or threatened) by a trace of the chest-voice running into it, every loud tone throwing into play a set of fibres, or muscles, that *ought* to belong only to the produc-

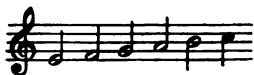
tion of the chest-voice. Here arises the great question: Is that wrong *under all circumstances*? I say: No! This trace I have found running in families where I had several relatives under observation. It never interfered, it never tired; and when you *compelled* the singer to do without it, the organ grew void of resonance and character. As long as one has nothing better to put in its place, *after trying conscientiously*, let it remain thus. Watch carefully, that the "fibre" does not get the monopoly, and convince yourself that this mode of production is natural, and not a strain. Two of the greatest contralti of the last decades, whom America has heard and loved, possessed that quality in its highest, almost perilous development. But if anyone ever has listened to those wonderful duets in *Semiramide* sung by Mmes. Patti and Scalchi, the perfection, beauty and splendour of which no eulogy can express and no living ear will perhaps ever hear in like perfection, that listener can safely assert that with such virtuosity of execution, such wealth and strange, limitless modulation of tone, Mme. Scalchi—in spite of her "chesty" voice—cannot have used her organ wrongly. She did not—then.

My pupils may remember having frequently heard me use the term "chesty." Others should know that

I mean, by this term, a manner of emitting low middle tones in which a slight pressure of the larynx or pharynx is applied to an otherwise colourless middle tone. By doing so, one makes it *resemble* the chest-note, though it never merges into it. It is a convenient means for creating "depth," where the *real* chest-note might sound forced or feel uncomfortable. One always feels the "chesty" notes in the back (cavity) of the mouth; the "chest"-note, down in the throat or in the chest-region.

#### HIGHER NOTES

Above this "lower middle register"






the female voice commences that wonderful expansion

of sound and tone-colour, on

which can make every tone a poem, every phrase a delight and a surprise. Here the magic begins to work which makes nations slaves of prima donnas and inspires genius to works of lasting beauty. People are perhaps not quite cognizant of their own powers—or of the powers which subjugate them. And *because* of the many failures in achievement, I shall try to let


in a ray from my own little lamp of honest experience upon the parting of the ways for good or evil.



That point lies between  $E^2$  and  $F^2$  . Exactly as a change occurred about one octave lower, between  $E^1$  and  $F^1$  , so now, *with much greater regularity*, a change takes place precisely in that half-tone beyond which appears a series of notes of remarkably resonant power. Beauty, steadiness, yet variability, and intense carrying-power, are their characteristics.

To the register below  belong the changes of *soulful* expression. ABOVE this  $f$  (or the  $e$  below) the "sound," abstract music, virtuosity, passion, ringing joy and jubilant triumph over conquered difficulty, have their reign. The "word," the "text," becomes secondary, is even sacrificed when interfering with the ease and beauty of the tone. And if once the voice is "placed" rightly for producing these notes, there is no saying to what lengths the increase in range, power and beauty may go.

Here, too, even more clearly than elsewhere, I have

found proof of the maxim, the importance of which ought to be consoling and inspiring to every student: "If you are able to produce *one single tone* in any new register, rest assured that with almost equal ease you will have, ere long, three or four of them—the entire 'register,' or at least the greater part of that group of notes, as your sure possession."

I do *not* say: If your limit has been  or

 and if you then can sing , you have

the rest. *By no means.* That *G* may have been (and often is) a "pulled up *F*."


Recently, as an instance, I had to advise a remarkably fine lyric voice. Her Munich "authority" had taught her (since she had no *natural* aptitude for "head-tone"): "*Force your voice up evenly and energetically* (Schreien Sie sich nur ordentlich hinauf!), for by so doing the high notes will develop to a certainty." I need not say that the young, rich voice *broke* on *A<sub>b</sub>*, and her *G* and *F<sub>♯</sub>* had already lost their volume and true pitch. In such a case the head-register has to be *created* with patience, care—and time.

I stated before, that registers have a tendency to "rise" when approached from below. And nowhere is the danger greater, nowhere are the results more disastrous, than just here. The change from chest-

voice to middle voice announces itself by a "break"—that is a warning in itself. But one octave higher the voice begins to "break" only when already strained, when almost too late, when false and tremulous tones begin to take the place of the originally strong, healthy sounds. The master alone can point out this difference in tone-production, unless you get it by imitating a particularly happy and evident case.

If you "drag up" your *E's* and *F's* to *F#s* and *G's*, or even higher, the elasticity of your vocal bands will last awhile, then the muscles will weaken, and the first uncertainty and discomfort will show *several notes below* the point where you have strained. One can still go on straining for a while. (Therein lurks another danger.) The collapse at the vital point comes last of all—not before several of the props have given way.

In the meantime, during the singing out of tune, during the throat-aches and the growing feebleness of some steps, the "patient" has been looking for the fault where it did not exist. Let me explain further:

Up to that note (about *F*<sup>2</sup> ) the singer,

when swelling to a certain loudness, has had a sensation as if his *upper throat* were "doing some work,"

cradling the tone, holding and supporting it—the upper throat with the muscles of the pharynx combined. When one sings softly, one cannot gauge tone-emission; only in louder tones one feels whether one has absolute control of increase and decrease, and comfort in holding them in their fullness.

Here another law: *Any* tone is rightly produced in the throat which can be swelled or diminished at will.

(Mind, I do not speak of faulty *vowel-formation* in the mouth.)

And *no* note is properly produced, or should be sung at all, which one cannot “manage,” *i. e.*, change in tone-colour and loudness as the case requires or as vocal laws permit.

Now, the *sensation* in the upper range—in the “head-voice”—becomes quite a different one. One does not feel one’s throat any more. The breath passes quite unperceived through the larynx, and the whole sound seems to rise into, and to exist in, the cavities of mouth and nose. One feels, rather, that the resonance soars to a place (we say briefly) “in the head.” Any pupil who once has had that delightful sensation of freedom, resonance and certainty on any one of her upper notes, will never forget it and will be able to repeat it. The strain seems to be taken entirely away

from the throat, and therefore one can try again and again, until the "head-tone" becomes a fixed habit.

*How* one makes one's pupils produce or even "think" the first head-tone, is one's own special trick, and depends as much upon one's own inventiveness as upon the pupil's attitude. I have had to *surprise students into it*—with seemingly impossible vowels on tones they never thought to reach. One tone, one vowel firmly established, soon brings the whole group into line. And these sounds, often faint at the outset, have the most surprising power of expansion and growth in a soprano voice. Sometimes I venture to compare them, in this quality, to a soap-bubble. You have just to "blow carefully" on them, and they increase in colour and size to an astonishing degree—but here the simile ends. For the soap-bubble bursts, and the voice *never* breaks, if you continue in "head-notes." Only when you relapse into undue middle-voice on those highest notes, the bubble-simile may hold good; but then the tone was never beautiful to begin with.

In teaching I often employ the term "neutral tone." By that expression I mean to say that we teachers mostly make the mistake of exacting from our students *a good tone* sung together with *a good vowel*, thus demanding two difficulties at the same time. I



would separate the two studies absolutely. In fact, I find that the endeavour to produce certain vowels *pure* in the elementary stages, ruins the chance of "good tone." It strains and stiffens the reflecting surfaces to such an extent, that the exertion reacts upon the larynx. I would recommend notes to be sung on *any* vowel—on any *mixture* of vowels—on any *modified* vowel, insisting only upon the one condition, "that the tone be sweet, pure and absolutely comfortable, resonant withal." As soon as that neutral tone is fairly established, the *second* difficulty, "the pure vowel," may be added. If a pupil *can* unite vowel-study at once with tone-emission, so much the better. That is individual. What makes me insist here upon the *utility* of the neutral tone is,

That the development of the head-register is effected *solely* under the influence of the neutral tone, *i. e.*, with a quality of tone which has the admixture of almost any vowel; *provided*, that the head-tone is never kept thereby from being sweet, resonant, pure and perfectly comfortable.

For it should be stated here that vowels *never* should be uttered in their utmost purity where head-tones play an important part. Their sounds demand a bell-like, elastic openness of the soft palate, I would say, almost a suspension, a balancing of the pliable

muscles of the upper throat and mouth. Distinct vowels again would throw these muscles into rigidity, would make the pliant "bell-shape" an absolute impossibility. "O" may be sweet; but a pure O admits no space, no expansion, leaves the channel for utterance high, but too narrow. Pushing the breath then, or forcing the tone, would make the throat "tickle" or "choke." A pure A, on the contrary, is far too brilliant, and becomes painfully sharp. Betwixt these two the mixture *OAO* is the only possible solution, and serves for *both* extreme vowels.

"U" we may eliminate at once. For it lowers the soft palate so far toward the tongue that the head-tones would have no chance of "growth" or "rise." You should exchange it with a *rounded U*, similar to an O . . . and lo! you come near the mixture *AO*—the dark neutral vowel. "E" (we always think of Italian or German vowel-sounds) closes the mouth and lifts the tongue. "I" shuts the teeth still more. Imagine the *E*-sound not as the exact, clean vowel as in "state," but in the modified form of "fair"; not like *é* in French, but like *è*. Sing "fair" on a high note, with an open mouth, and you will find it becomes first cousin to "far"—you can almost exchange the sounds. Try the word "*forage*" with similar muscular action, and you will see these three words, or

vowels, almost interchanging, which, a few steps further down in the scale, should regain their distinctive character with the *more* exactitude as their outlines were blurred above, sacrificed for the "manageability" of the head-voice. *I* and *E*, again, are closely related. Try them in the modified form of "beginning," "forbidding," in relation to "unending," "embellished," and you will find *I* gradually assuming the qualities of *E*. In the middle notes you will have to make the second syllable in "perdition" brighter than in speech. On the upper notes the same "clearness" would result in contraction, in "squeezing," and something like "pur-da-tion" is the only adaptable form there.

(In these words, of course, we think of English vowels.)



Thinking of the "e" in "per" will add the slight admixture needed.

By modifying all vovelling, you can make the hearer believe that you are singing all vowels *pure*.

These head-tones you now bring down to meet, or rather "overlap," the upper medium.



You reserve the medium for the loud, you use the head-tone for the soft sounds. But here appears the principal quality, the immense advantage the soprano has in "colouring" her voice: in those four or five tones which form the bridge, *each* tone, when soft, is (or should be) a "head-tone," merging quite imperceptibly into the louder middle tone; and slips out of the middle tone again in perfect smoothness to be held and finished in the head-register. (About the one—seeming—exception we shall speak later at length.)

I might almost say: The tone, rightly commenced, retains one thread of the head-voice all the way through, so that *at any instant* you can lead the tone back to crystalline softness. The head-voice remains on the bigger tone like electro-plating on other metal, adding only an additional beauty. And furthermore, a head-tone, though seemingly far less powerful than the middle tone on the same step, has a carrying quality far exceeding the one which results from the more compressed resonance.

The neglect of the habit, nay, of the necessity of thus intermingling head-tone and middle voice, ruins so many dramatic voices. *Because* the head-voice, at first, is not as strong as the middle voice, the latter is used exclusively in its stead. No attempt is made to

shade the voice down into the despised weak register. The dramatic soprani thus begin the tone with a shock; they end it with a jerk or a contraction. And the throat must be of unusual toughness to stand such treatment for long without suffering. My rule may be stated as follows:

Do not demand *power* from the head-voice, as a general thing. When you need that instead of intensity, the middle voice will step in as an ally, and support the less robust tone. I would say, the middle voice puts a *backbone* into an otherwise too tenuous body. The head-voice, pushed too hard by breath-power, would lose quality and be thrown off the pitch. *You will "sing sharp."* On the other hand, never ask buoyant softness of high notes in the pure middle voice. If you *suppress* it so far, the voice will now deteriorate and will drop from the pitch. You will "sing flat"—or tremble.

*A piano should never be a suppressed forte.* The qualities of a *p* require mostly a different motion of the vocal apparatus. If you push the *p* into an *f* without adding the support of additional muscles, you are liable to fail both in power and pitch.

One brief word more, and the long, because important, Division will be disposed of.

As the falsetto is of no use to the greater number


of male voices, so the "pure head-voice" of a contralto is usually not ringing enough to top an otherwise rich organ. The contralti alone, therefore, may occasionally transcend the law of *always* using the head-tones on their highest notes. They can sweep with their middle voices across the appointed limit. Their organs, for the most part, are resistant enough to warrant such "excursions," if they own those notes at all.

#### HIGHEST NOTES

Finally, the singer who owns the "whistling notes"



(*vide* Mozart's *Königin der Nacht*,

Blondchen in *Belmonte e Costanze*, the part of Lakmé in Delibes' opera) will feel as if the form of resonance, hitherto seeming like , changes

for the highest notes into . The reflecting-

point seems to be drawn higher and higher until the notes feel as if "flying out at the top of the head." Of course, that is purely a sensation, and much in sensation must be individual. But *art* does not enter into the production of these tones, and we need not discuss the "managing," or the education, of this exceptional and often useless register.

### Division III : The Mouth

#### TONES AND CONSONANTS

##### *A. Tones*

It is in the *shaping* of the tone that the most obvious results are accomplished. Nature gives the origin; *we* are largely responsible for the result.

If you had the most marvellous vocal cords in the soundest of larynxes, and the lung-power of the nightingale, it would be of no avail to you, if nature denied you a well-arched hard palate, or obstructed your nasal passages. Here we again have to deal with established, unyielding facts. Thus, when throat physicians were telling my pupils, "you have the most superb vocal cords, you *ought* to become a splendid singer," did they ever think that their disability for attaining such ends lay in factors quite palpable, open to inspection, and yet as little changeable as the very stature of their bodies? The surgeon can remove the tonsils (it is a much mooted question, whether the operation is not as often harmful as beneficial to a singer), but the other glands, the cartilages, and the bony structure, nature has fixed once for all. I have heard beautiful voices coming from behind very bad and ill-set teeth, but clogged cavities and depressed palates always imposed strict limitations on the voice.

What *can* we shape, then? Answer: The *soft palate*, the *tongue* and the *lips*. The lips give only the bright or dull colour to the tone. The palate and the tongue are the *educators*, the *guides* of the tone born within the larynx.

This is to be no method to show *how* these deflecting and reflecting surfaces are to be used; only a cursory discussion of the subject, to warn or advise those who stand bewildered in the midst of "methods" and countless explanations.

#### THE SOFT PALATE, AND THE TONGUE

It is a simple thing to know that the larynx is closed by a cover, near which, and in front of which, the thick and muscular part of the tongue is rooted. Unless occupied with speaking and eating, the tongue is supposed to lie in a relaxed condition flat in the mouth, touching the lower front teeth.

For most of the neutral tones in singing, such *ought* to be its position. But, unfortunately, muscles of throat and tongue are closely allied, and the latter desires to participate sympathetically in all the work the vocal cords and its nearest neighbours are doing. It is perhaps the hardest work in all the *technique* of singing to assign to the tongue its proper sphere, *and keep it there*—to make it an *independent* member.



A singer whose voice is not yet well under control finds his, or her, larynx descending quite sensibly for lower notes and ascending with the higher steps. Above it, the soft palate does exactly the same. The uvula "hangs down" on lower tones and rises higher and higher with the ascending scale, until it absolutely creeps into the now quite elevated soft palate. I believe that much of the "compass" depends also upon the elasticity of this muscle. When it cannot stretch any more to the required resonance, the proportion ceases and, with it, the power of any higher notes. Inarticulate shrieking, of course, would require no equable suspension of the palate. Sounds emitted by the vocal cords without any adequate space for resonance are absolutely unmusical and useless.

To make the tongue independent and docile, I am sorry to say that I place no faith whatsoever in the so-called *gymnastics* for the tongue. They wrench and tire the throat. They pull at the root of the tongue. What the pianist does not achieve in his exercises on the piano, he will not obtain by years of athletic exercise with his hands. On the contrary, he will spoil and unfit every muscle of his hand, though so-called technicians have suggested, and exacted, the wildest aberrations. Remember Schumann's famous attempt.

In the *educated* singer, who can elevate his, or her, soft palate at will, *i. e.*, by mere thought, before uttering the apposite tone, and who can keep it in position, the larynx also remains almost stationary in notes of different pitch. Thus the condition is given of an almost uniform instrument for equable resonance.

As long as the larynx *will* assume a too elevated position, the voice will sound flat and nasal. If held too low, it will become guttural and hollow. The more mobile the (frequently quite stiff) bands of the soft palate become, the more even and resonant the tone. For by their very mobility that part of the nasal cavities is kept open where the tone receives much of its ringing quality.

One gradually learns to drive a large part of the air-column (now become sound) into and against those portions above, and near, the pharynx, thus releasing the vocal cords from all overwork. The rest of the resonance takes place against that most important sounding-board above the flattened tongue, the hard palate—in lower tones the greater, in the higher register the lesser, portion.

And now, the tongue? Thus far we had merely a "neutral vowel." The tongue brings system and variety into a chaotic condition. It stays at the bot-

tom of a well-opened mouth; and you have *A*. The lips round themselves a bit, making the exit smaller, while the walls of the mouth contract on almost all sides; you get as a result *O*. When you point (shoot out) your lips, exaggerating the position of *O*, you obtain *U*. These three vowels, with all their dependents, we call the "dark vowels"; their resonance is chiefly in the middle and posterior portion of the mouth, *with the tongue eliminated*. The tongue serves only as a sort of "floor," and assumes, in perfect sounds, the *shape of a trough*, which extends from its very root almost to the point where it lies in contact with the teeth.\*

For the *bright* vowels *E* and *I*, in their varied gradations, the tongue does not remain passive. On *E* it lifts itself into a hill. On *I* (always staying close to the teeth) it fills almost the entire cavity of the mouth, leaving but a small channel between the hard palate and itself.

In almost all cases where violent passions or sharp characterisation are not called for (*vide* the part of "Mime," of "Die Hexe" in *Hänsel and Gretel*, of

\*I liken at times this sort of tone to a pear resting in one's mouth, the stem pointing forward between one's teeth. One may almost draw out the whole fruit by its slender stem, getting more fullness and more body the more the tone is drawn forward.

"Junker Spärlich" in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*), the tone ought to retain that peculiar quality which makes it resemble those balls of Japanese rock-crystal of which you never seem to fathom the profundity. Clear, pure and round the notes should seem to be issuing from the lips in *cantilena*. The hearer should never perceive your actual limitations in power.

Here I come to the point why I consider persistent vocalising on the vowel *A* fatiguing and harmful. The *A* of the Italian is a natural, free sound, sometimes brilliant, more often tending toward *O*, and very little spoiled by consonants. Fancy what play and freedom the vowels have in a language *only four words* of which end with a consonant! From your earliest years every word can resound to the end like a bell! Italians have no opportunity to kill off their vowels viciously and prematurely with final consonants. Even in abbreviations, an occasional *L*, *N* or *R* constitutes all their ways of "disposing of vowels." In northern languages there are *all kinds* of *A*, *except* the free one. It would not be polite to our forefathers to state with what an ugly heritage they have saddled our "art of song." We all know that in the effort to sing a good, pure *A*, we can form a hundred abortive ones and never strike the exact, free, resonant sound. With *no* vowel whatsoever are there so

many chances of singing badly as precisely on *A*. And yet that vowel, in slavish imitation of the Italian, is made the continuous vocalising medium for pupils who *can* have no standard for the *A*, having scarcely heard a good one in their whole experience!\*

A golden rule to be given is: *Know precisely what tone-colour you want to produce.* Your muscles, if loosened by intelligent work, will instinctively lead you the right way.

Let the teacher give the pupil a *standard*—a few tones by which to measure all the rest; the student will soon appreciate the differences, if led to compare step by step, with concentrated attention, the fine and easy notes with the strained and imperfect ones.

My own experience has taught me, that not only soundless gymnastics of the vocal apparatus, but *all* the pulling of soft palate, pressing of larynx, coercing of tongue, etc., will *never* help to produce a proper tone.

One may *indicate* to the tongue (for instance, by

\*The *revanche* occurs, when an Italian tries to sing in a Northern idiom. He does it most rarely, except perhaps in French, declaring all other languages "barbaric." That objection is convenient—yes. But it does not overcome the fact that for a hundred northern singers singing not only "opera in Italian" but "opera on an Italian stage," you can find hardly *one* Italian artist who would appear in German, English, Russian or even French répertoire.

pressure with the handle of a teaspoon) where it should stay, and thus present to the student's eye a view of the *perfectly open* throat as it should be while singing. But, with *any* foreign object in your mouth, though never so small, your tone will be disturbed, nay, bad. Besides, as long as one twists and "places by effort" *any* of those interior muscles, the tone will suffer. A *habit* has to be created first. Only then can the notes be produced round and resonant. But, during elementary study, *one* well-emitted tone, *one* perfectly easy vowel, will suddenly work the charm and relax the muscles. I find the manner of *consciously* working through the arrangement of the vocal apparatus to be, in its results, like a snail's pace compared to the bird's flight, after the pupil has once mastered the "one good tone." Of course, if you cannot induce the pupil to strike that, the other way—the inverted one—is the only resource. Then, when the good tone *does* present itself, let the student watch closely the mechanism which leads to it. Being master of the tone, he will soon rule the mechanism, too, and avoid falling into errors.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY OBSERVATIONS

Those who insist upon "registerless voices" have pointed to some of the world's present renowned

*prime donne* as brilliant examples, insisting that these latter themselves assert the absolute law of "no register." I shall try to explain my observations.

I have spoken elsewhere of "chesty" tones, and may repeat here that I do *not* mean tones produced with the muscles of the *real* chest-register, but certain lower "middle tones" produced with an intentional contraction of the soft palate which makes them *resemble* the real unadulterated chest-quality.

Precisely in the same sense I use, with advanced pupils, the word "heady." I make them *imagine* that they use their middle register like their head-voice. They acquire at the moment of so doing a certain floating, ethereal, "bodiless" quality on passages or sustained tones which, in the same place, would be quite out of reach of head-tones for most voices, however much they may *resemble* them.

Now, those voices of the great singers cited to me—and I have known many of them from the beginning of their careers—were flexible, delicate *coloratura* organs, silvery, attractive, but created decidedly on the "one-colour system." No doubt, they might not have been conscious, while carrying their then comparatively light voices up and down, that the seemingly uniform voice was in reality "a structure of several stories." When their notes began to "grow,"

they grew likewise uniformly. The incomparable intelligence as to sound (for it is *that* which makes and marks the great singer) with which they watched and guided their own progress, prevented them from ever neglecting one set of notes (which I would have called "register") in favour of others, or even of a single note.

If indeed they thought their voices "quite uniform," it would explain that point in the career of several, where they came perilously near stranding on the unseen rocks which, in their instinctive knowledge of the right way, they finally avoided. But if, for instance, one of them does not use her unattractive chest-voice in place of middle notes now grown full and mellow with age, it would be strange to say that her chest-notes "did not exist," or that they were—when "breaking through" (as they will occasionally)—"wrongly taken" notes. There is another case where physical and mental characteristics combined to change the *coloratura* voice into the marvel of a dramatic organ, which retained—an almost unheard-of case—all the flexibility, silveriness and compass of the youthful voice. This consummate artist, I understand, denies all "changes in registers," and claims the difference to be *solely* the result of a *different placing of the resonance*. But precisely here I am bound to



say that in her voice the register (the existence of which is denied) exists in all its power and effectiveness, together with its limitations; that it lends itself to overwhelming effects, and that the chest-register quite overbalances the middle voice; that it has become, in fact, one of the pillars of her vocal possibilities. Here, again, no one can say, "That is a note wrongly taken;" one could only speak of "beautiful" or "exaggerated." Perhaps these artists imagined solely "the higher (or lower) point of resonance" as the origin of all change—a mere matter of *sending the breath* to a given point; while (*in part*) the secret consists in doing so, *but only* in consequence of, or in direct participation with, the work the larynx is doing underneath, grouping or releasing different sets of muscles for the different parts of the voice. If any one can say, "There is no distinct chest-register, no separate head-voice," I can say likewise, "There is no difference between marble and wood, or between granite and cement." An architect might *say* so, but he cannot build a house on such principles. If one succeeds vocally on these lines, it is an accident—unless you demand rather little from your organ. For I admit that there is a certain *small* number of voices created on the principle of a soubrette or *coloratura* voice, where the differences come very little into play.

Most of the great singers created and developed their own voices by purely individual thought and work. I think it can truthfully be said, they all recognised the same aim with unerring certainty, but each one chose—*had* to choose—his or her individual path, strictly defined by the particular personality. Therefore, to work out *in all details* a method—the method—and run *all* voices through this mill, is the most dangerous and thoughtless undertaking imaginable.

### *B. Consonants*

When you have mastered all difficulties of breath; when your execution has the lightness of a bird's song; when your tone is as perfect as that of a bell of flawless metal—you suddenly make the discovery that your art of song is only at its beginning. For where is the thing which brings intelligence into this shapeless tone-world? Where is the *word* that helps you to move to tears or to flood the heart with sunshine?

Consonants can be our allies or our arch-enemies. The sooner we secure their aid or recognise their disturbing qualities, the more rapid and certain our progress. I have heard pupils do fairly perfect things in scale-work, in the placing and swelling of

notes; but, on attempting "enunciation," quality, evenness, expression vanished all of a sudden.

Having said, "Consonants should be made *helpers*, if possible," I should have added, "Work with consonants is a wonderful means, ready at hand, to prevent the pupil from overdoing his tone-work and from straining his vocal cords. Judiciously employed, it assists in removing certain muscular limitations which pure tone-work finds it most difficult to conquer."

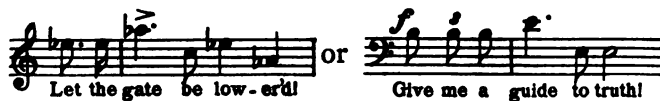
From this point of view I do not at all disparage the use of (*properly adapted*) songs in the earlier stages of tuition. As long as such songs are but treated as exemplifications of "phrasing" and, above all, as an opportunity for training with consonants, they can only serve the intelligent progress of the pupil. "Sentiment," as yet, has to be absolutely eliminated. The song becomes simply a means for developing technique.

It is not incumbent upon the writer to pass in review all the development and the employment of the several consonants of the alphabet. Suffice it to point to some abuses and to eventual dangers.

I would discountenance, for instance, the frequently employed explosive use of "ma," "mo," etc., as a *tone-placing* exercise. With "ba-bo-be," also with

"pe-pi-pa," etc., you "expel the air in front," but you do not *guide* it in the least. With the explosive "m-m-m-a" you first collect an inordinate amount of breath and then force it out as from a pop-gun. And the pupil *deludes* himself into the idea that he is learning "to bring the voice forward."

Anything that forces the root of the tongue to do violent work, is detrimental in the elementary stages of singing. It tires the larynx, also. Therefore, exercises like "ga-ge-gu," etc., should be abandoned. G is at all times one of the most treacherous consonants. If pronounced hard, as in



it should be swift and trenchant as a scimitar-flash. For otherwise it obstructs the air-passages, intercepts the sound, and is apt to make the tone break, especially in a high range.

On the other hand, in *cantilena* passages like



during the utterance of the softer G, the tongue should touch the back palate only, as two rose-leaves

may lie against each other. In this latter case the tone must not be cut in two by the action of the consonant. It must continue. Try gently



with the admixture of an "h," again and again, until you feel the tone-current absolutely undisturbed, carrying the *gh* along as a brook would carry a leaf. The same should be studied, and brought to *absolute perfection*, on sounds like *b* or *d*:



or with *any* consonant on which it is possible to create a sound-bridge. Unless you have achieved this elementary process, this "passing" with consonants over an *unbroken, uninterrupted* tone-surface, it is useless to attack the more difficult problems. One must control both the *incisive* force and the gliding quality of the *same* consonant, at will. That saves the singer fatigue and anxiety, and gives reposeful satisfaction to the hearer.

A natural sound-bridge, than which no better can

be imagined, is the "ng" in "singing" or "longing." Of course, you can spoil that also by too much energy, or too much (or too lengthy) pressure. You need barely lift your tongue and touch the hard palate with it like a caress; you will thus obtain with "ng" the model tone I mean.

It cannot be mentioned too emphatically, that on a whole series of consonants, *l m n r v z* (English pronunciation); one can sing not only *a* tone, but *whole groups* of notes and even entire melodies. (*Vide* "HUMMING.") To this series should be joined, as a very important "treacherous member," the soft *s* found in words like "easel," "rosy," and in German in *all* words commencing with *s*. However these "liquids" beautify and help to carry the tone as sound-bridges or end-consonants, they are dangerous in all attacks—chiefly in that of high passages. One can pronounce, for instance, the *l* (1) by *lightly* resting the tongue against the teeth without the slightest pressure, (2) by pressing the tongue *hard* against the teeth, (3) by flattening its tip and arching the whole of it unduly. The last manner, a mark of provincialism or want of breeding, we can eliminate at once; though the singing-master will occasionally have to struggle with such shortcomings. It is in the second manner that danger lurks. For, if you press your

tongue hard against the front teeth, the muscles of the entire tongue down to its very root become rigid. The root presses forcibly upon the cover of the larynx. The greater your energy now, the worse the effect, for one cannot emit a sound freely, and at the same time press down on the point where it originates.

I have heard singers practising a certain measure, with an *l* on a high note, for months, getting it worse and worse as time wore on. Had they but *relaxed* their *l*!!

A word famous for difficulty is Wagner's



There is the high note preceded by the treacherous *g*, doubly treacherous because

of the *r* following. For if *r* is not rolled loosely with the tip of the tongue in the fore part of the mouth, it is but an exaggerated *l* or *g*, according to its position. And, finally, the high note (*Gral*) closes with the *l* which, the more clearly it be pronounced (difficult to avoid, since the whole Lohengrin story hinges on that one word), the more nearly it brings the tone to breaking and to disaster.

Always *relax* your tongue for *l*, until it moves as freely and as lightly as a banner in the breeze. The work on this consonant should be done by the tongue's

most flexible tip; either swiftly, like the flip of a whip, or softly lingering, like a caress.

The soft German *s* (*z* in English) at the beginning of a high tone offers a difficulty the more insidious as contrasted with the ease which it lends to tone-connections in the lower register. The tongue, now lying low behind the teeth, is again apt to press too hard against them; hence, it also presses upon the cover of the larynx at the opposite end, more or less rigidly, and inevitably shuts for an instant the gate of sound, producing a "scoop" like



A Soprano, beginning on a high head-note with such an *s*, cannot be too cautious.

Here follow a few rules about the changeful sound of "*ch*" in the German language.

The untrained German, or the half-trained artist, pronounces his "ich, mich, dich," etc., so harshly across his lower teeth, that the question has often been asked, "Why do the Wagner singers always sing "isch, misch, disch," etc.? No—they never did. Only a Suabian might do so. But to the *foreign* ear the similarity of the over-stressed *ch* to the original *sch* (as in "Tisch") appears a sameness.



A German *ch*, exaggerated, is *always ugly*. It should be *reduced*, like other consonants, to that proportion where it can unite the qualities of *distinctness* and *tone-help*. I insist that the consonant should ever contribute to enhance the qualities of the tone—as the frame “brings out” a picture, or the setting a jewel. Clear and distinct the consonant should always remain, *except* when the softer high notes require a sacrifice, *i. e.*, a softer attack. This you easily concede when you have to deal with *repeated* words. For then no one cares—least of all the composer—for the exact sense of a phrase already pronounced clearly *elsewhere*. The *tonal* effect now takes precedence, and the musical enlargement of the original thought claims first consideration, as in all the earlier operas, or most of the world-renowned oratorios.

But, returning to the variable pronunciation of *ch*: The pupil cannot possibly err, if he places the *ch* *softly along the same mouth-position* which the vowel has to which it belongs.

(1) Pronounce “nach.” You open your mouth for “na.” Now gently blow the *ch*-sound upon the *a* without changing anything inside the mouth, and you will feel the air running along all the surface of the upper mouth-cavity with a slight “aspirate” noise.

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Do not employ any more force. The result will be just right.

(2) Pronounce "Loch." The mouth-opening is smaller, the tongue seems to draw up, and the *ch* (again pronounced gently) appears with a slightly rougher aspiration.

(3) *Uch*, as in "Fluch," only raises the back of the tongue still more. The *ch*, on its outward way, impinges still more roughly on the hard palate.

(4) *I* and *E*. Take "Blech," or "Licht." The tongue lies against the teeth, but is raised more or less in the middle. The air, in the shaping of *ch*, now streams across the lower teeth with quite a loud rush. This slightly hissing noise should never degenerate into a similitude to *sch* (English *sh*). Follow without exaggeration of breath-pressure the position of *e* and *i*, and your consonant will suffer no deviation.

#### CONSONANT-BRIDGES

##### I.

My *general* rule is (there are occasions enough when you "spin out a tone" by means of a consonant): Learn to enunciate the consonants independently of the singing-tone, as in a whisper:



(the *rrr* only like a “whirr,” not mixed in with the tone). In the next example the *ffff* is like a sharp gust:



## 2.

To teach a student to finish his words *with* the “liquid” resting on a musical sound, requires few words. For that comes naturally, but in second place.



## 3.

When words are strung together, the breath should never cease "flowing out"—carrying the tone constantly forward. Even incisive consonants, and the few explosive or guttural ones, should never stop the flow. With a continuous flow the elasticity or resonance of the voice can never be interfered with. (Here we do not refer to highly dramatic utterances.)

## 4.

When a phrase seems next to impossible there is, in most cases, a *consonant* at fault. Try the phrase first without any consonant at all; then substitute "helpful," if at times meaningless, consonants. Having acquired possibility, and later ease, with these, you will see your way clear to manage the more difficult ones.

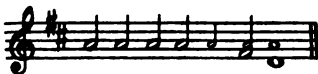
## 5.

As soon as the single consonant has been "explained" and fixed, I have found the following simple exercise the most profitable. Moreover, it is interesting to the beginner and quite within his grasp, being at once the very beginning of, and the chief medicine for, "bel canto."

I take the ordinary scale, up or down, as seems best. Or an exercise like



Or occasionally a single note



*anything to vary, to rest the voice, while avoiding weak spots.* I prefer poems like Tennyson's "In Memoriam"—*any* poem, the metre of which exactly fits my exercise, but preferably such lines as permit, as a rule, a breath in the middle of the line. For at first one has to go *quite slowly*, and in a tentative way.

An - swer each oth - er // in the mist.  
 The bells are hushed, the night is still.

Shall I see joy and light a - gain?  
 The eve - ning air grows dusk and brown.

N. B.—One should remember that any phrase—later in songs, as now in exercises—which ends *upward*, requires at least one-third more breath-reserve than phrases ending *downward*, and therefore one should select lines permitting a breath in the middle of such an exercise.

On these simple groups of notes we string the words of each line like pearls, changing, repeating

and listening. At first some vowels will appear "squeezed," some consonants will cut the continuity, some will be indistinct, some quite wrong. But a little patience! The student who, in singing a scale, has to think of no musical difficulty, but can "listen," will soon marshal his consonants into line and assimilate bad sounds to good ones. The rule "never to break, in a *cantilena*, continuity of sound during one breath," will help him to make his "bridges," so that in a few weeks' time the foundation for *absolute evenness of colour* and of an even, gentle emission of consonants can be firmly laid.

ON USING CONSONANTS IN HIGH REGISTERS: THE  
TONGUE

It is self-evident, that on the higher notes of the female voice the same game of "make believe" and "interchange" of consonants must occur which we have pointed out for vowels. *D* turns into a relative of *l* by modifying the pointed shape of the tongue. *B* and *m* drop their excessive characteristics and even adopt the lip-motion of *w* by making the lips only *approach* each other, instead of pressing them together. *G* acquires something of the undulating quality of the Italian and German *j* (or *y* in "yonder"). On *f* the teeth, which almost imbedded them-

selves in the lower lip, now scarcely touch its surface, so that the interior of the mouth can retain the "bell-shape." Whenever, in women's voices, any result is particularly beautiful, the interior always resembles the bell-shape. There are some well-known singers who preach and teach the elevated tongue. Having been a close observer of most of them I can but honestly say, that whenever they sang a particularly well-managed, fine and thrilling high note, the tongue *was always down*; there was the superbly open throat exposed to view, and the tongue with its groove in the middle, like a rose-leaf. Occasionally we delude ourselves. Experienced singers assert that "they were not singing out of tune"; that "they have no tremolo in their voice"; that "they never breathe with their shoulders, or frown"; when any one could have verified the contrary. Why should they not instinctively do the right thing, and find their tongue rising "during observation," as it *will* with every untrained student, deceiving themselves quite naïvely?

#### THE LIPS

The lips are the *curtains* of the tone-chamber, as it were. If you want sunlight, pull them aside; if you have to express gloom and darkness, let them down.

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The matter is quite simple. I have heard some singers say, "The best way to control the tone is to press the lips tightly against the teeth." I have seen it done to advantage, but only in faces with naturally thin lips. The "instrument," God-given, decides here. One rule I may give to students:

*Any* undue or spasmodic contraction of the lips is generally the result of some undue contraction of the soft palate. It vanishes as soon as the throat itself has acquired the proper freedom. *Habits* of the lips are easily corrected by proper attention, whether there be a contortion (mostly sideways) on certain vowels, a lazy general relaxation, or a "pout," or a nervous tension. One has but to watch oneself in a mirror. I can but repeat: *Whenever* your mouth looks its best, your sound will be the most perfect. When your face shows no effort and you find yourself beautified by singing, *that* is the time when you are singing your best tones. No artist can look transfigured while uttering ugly sounds, scarcely any person; the one exception being in the Italian processional or devotional services, where I have heard the most atrocious and offensive sounds issue from the lips of sweet children, wrapt maidens, or devout elderly people.



N. B.—When you stand before a chorus, as a conductor, you *can* know who sings the good, rich tone and who shocks you with the bad one—just by looking, *if you know how*. The exquisite mobility of some mouths shows intelligence; the stolid immutability of other lips indicates “any kind” of tone; the grimace of others *must* beget monstrous sounds; the timid pucker betrays the “driftwood” of the vocal choir—all this is set plainly before your eyes to read. This is so interesting a study, that rehearsing can never weary you, if you are interested in individualities.

## CHAPTER III

### Expression

THE *breath* is now supposed to be under control. The *tone* may be at your command. The *consonants* stand ready for use. All this is but like a heap of bricks, or hewn stone, without the *expression* and *phrasing* which build up thoughts and shapes out of the still lifeless material.

The judge no more needs to have done the vilest and most immoral deeds, to fathom the soul of the criminal, than does a singer to have lived through all the emotions he will be called upon to express. But the imagination of both must readily receive contrasting and unusual pictures—the one of facts, the other of sentiments. The singer who should *really feel* all the woes he sings about, would be a wreck in briefest time. It is his other phantastical self, his *alter ego*, that breaks his heart, chokes with grief, or expires in exultation—not to speak of poisoning, stabbing, or becoming demented. To act like a consummate fool, one must be an immensely clever artist.

For the picture presented to the mind the singer

must be able to find the exact tone-colour instantaneously, almost instinctively. But as imagination does not always sit on our doorsteps, we should be able to counterfeit emotion, and possess the art of "make-believe."

The artist who sings her rôle in opera has a comparatively easy time of it. Whether she represents a queen or a beggar; whether the scene be laid in laughing noon hours or in the hushed secrecy of a midnight chamber; whether fierce elements howl around her or she sit dreamily on oriental pillows: she has *not to create the atmosphere of her song*. She has for allies costume and scenery, and the magic play of light and shadow. Why should she express everything in her voice? She has limbs, the play of all muscles, endless variety of gesture, and is painted and rouged into the semblance of an old witch or an young girl, into an Ethiopian or a fair Titania. *Everything* helps her. In certain modern operas you can even go on calmly using your voice like a stone-cleaver—the orchestra will do all the rest, sigh, sob, plead, imprecate, move and enthuse the public without the singer's aid.\*

\*An instance of the "superfluity of voice" in modern opera:—At one of the foremost continental opera houses a novelty was to be given. As one of my operas was to be the

The singer away from scenery and stage-lights, often away from the thrilling orchestra with no gestures, make-up and costumes to help him, has a very different sort of battle to fight. With his very first notes he must enthrall the audience to such an extent that he transports them into the domain of his own thought, creating light or darkness, joy or grief, simplicity or splendour, youth or age, even tropical luxuriance or chill solitude. To do that one must *think*, and *think hard*; but one may be sure that the voice will respond with almost unequalled sensitiveness. *Once* you must have known, how the sound grows sleepy when your eyelids droop. After that you will only have to *think* your eyelids "down," and the drowsiness will creep into your voice. *Once* seize,

next novelty, I was invited to the preparations made for my predecessor. While we were listening to the dress-rehearsal, the tenor—who had one of three principal parts—met with an accident. His bad fall permitted him, however, to finish the rehearsal. During the evening he grew unexpectedly worse. No one else knew his part. Critics were already on the way, from all parts of Germany, to applaud the author at this première. To put off the performance would have meant a severe disappointment to many. Who could save the situation? The "first young man" of the dramatic company, an actor, came to the rescue. He learnt the *spoken* words before nightfall, passed hours and hours with the conductor rehearsing his entrances, and with the prompter's aid and the tenor part *spoken* the opera "came out"—and had its success.

with corrugated forehead, fiercely and passionately your sword-hilt; you will have but to repeat to yourself that action in thought, and the voice will rise to ringing tones of anger and pride. *Real* grief, *real* tears choke the voice. *Real* weakness deprives you of it altogether. *Real* fright would let you lose all power of expression and pitch, and *real* torture would make you exceed all bounds of musically adaptable sound. Here the sense of justness and measure must step in. Without imagination, however, you can transport neither yourself nor your hearer into enchanted regions.

Referring to this play of imagination and effect, one might say, without much exaggeration, that you have to sing quite as much with the soles of your feet, or with your eyebrows, as with your voice.

Of course, every contraction or relaxation of muscle must be *voluntary, well thought out*, and *never* the chance consequence of a tone. If in "thinking certain situations" you do not feel your feet as if chained to a rock or your hair beginning to rise with horror, you have not a drop of dramatic blood in your veins, nor can you thrill the souls of any audience. Try to sing Schubert's "Erlkönig." Every twenty seconds and less you have to change—from a creature of flesh and blood to a thing of air, from

a trembling boy to a comforting bearded father, from a hissing whiff of wind to the death-cry of the child. You must *be* night and uncanny star-light, the galloping horse and the ghastly willow-branches, a seducing phantom and the shimmer of light through the half-open casement at home. You need not caricature the faces, the movements of father, son and Erlking. Yet not a muscle in your body but will have throbbed quivering. You *need* the silence at the end; for one *is*, for the time, at the end of one's own physical possibilities.

In songs, in "Lieder," you generally strike but one single note of expression. Light up your face with that joy, or imbue it with that sadness. A slight play of feature is always allowable or welcome. Nothing is more exasperating than a stolid, immovable face. As an example of "impersonal" numbers to execute, let us take the graceful little Menuet by d'Exaudet, "Sur l'étang qui s'étend":

Before the singer begins, she must *feel* herself powdered, red-heeled and short-skirted; she must *smell* her patches and her own exaggerated, old-time perfumes. And if she is not conscious of the "dips" and the "curtseying" going on all through the short, exquisite number, she will not convey to her hearers the mental picture of the lighted rococo ball-room

with its innumerable mirrors, not have admired her dainty toes skipping over the parqueted floor.

I do not say that many in the audience possess in themselves the power of seeing all that. But the great, the perfect artist *lends* them that power. It is for *this* that artists are paid, loved, admired and remembered above any other human beings. Their power of magic and of personality no one can equal; and often I have been saddened by seeing how much the public "gave"—how spontaneously the soul of the audience went out to the artist—and how mercenary, inexpressibly inadequate and selfish the "performance" had been. As though an artist with such gifts owed no obligations!

### Health

Nothing is so important to the singer as health.

Not that "having a voice" depends solely upon the possession of a healthy organism. For "voice" is purely the result of *local* conditions, and from a frail, imperfect, deformed body may issue an attractive or even a powerful voice. It often happens that persons gifted with a peculiarly strong and resonant speaking organ have scarcely any aptitude for sustaining, or even producing, a vocal phrase. Or, if

there be a "singing-voice," the compass is often so small that the voice is quite useless for anything but speaking. On the other hand, some possessors of the finest voices I have known had rough or babyish organs in speaking; the contrast, when the singing began, being almost overpowering—or ludicrous.

But *if* you are a singer, it is your chief duty to keep well and strong. The man of science, the merchant, the employee, even most instrumental performers, can pursue their studies and fill their engagements under constant impediments and very adverse conditions of health. With a singer, even the slightest "cold" robs him of his power. A never so insignificant indisposition means losses of engagements—and instantly a most notable loss of money in consequence. If the quality of your voice be impaired, if by any chance you "break" on a note, your reputation is at once torn to bits by colleagues, the public and the press. And the agonies of anxiety, the strain of adjusting yourself to perilous circumstances—can anyone "pay" for those? for the nerve-strain you endure?

There *are* voices set in people's bodies as a mechanical toy might be inserted in a doll's throat. These fortunate few can sing under any and all circumstances—for 365 nights and any additional num-



ber of matinées within a year—and consequently outdo everybody else in the race for making money. As a general thing, however, the singing-voice is a most sensitive barometer. Long before an indisposition of a serious nature breaks out, long before a nervous collapse occurs, the voice announces it *to him who has an ear*. It is the last thing to recover, as it was the first thing to show debility of the system or viciousness of a group of organs. And yet, what singer has not noticed that, *whenever* his or her voice was, on some occasion, particularly and exceptionally beautiful, the next day inevitably brought hoarseness, a cold, a vocal *abaissement* (collapse) of some kind?

The voice, moreover, is the most tell-tale thing, more than eye or mouth, to him who knows its secrets. No matter what subject you may be singing of, through your notes run the thousand intensely coloured vibrations of your *real* feeling. If they coincide with the composition, you get, at times, soul-stirring effects. But preoccupation clips the wings of fancy, to a certainty; and if you have to think of your mental pain or of your indisposition, while singing, your performance will be lame, your interpretation devoid of spirit.

Live naturally—rather simply. All abuse of stimulants, all debauch, every perversion of natural

conditions, avenges itself sooner or later, even if some few throats can stand excessive smoking and hard drinking.

### **Relative Development of Voices**

To repeat: It is the most beautiful voices, the organs of great power, which increase and gain *least* during instruction. We teachers know how often—alas! by their own vainglory and by the constant flattery of injudicious friends—such voices are robbed of their bloom and injured in their elasticity. Smaller voices, sometimes those which seemed to be absolutely circumscribed in their compass, frequently make stupendous progress. They have decidedly the advantage as far as development and growth are considered.

One might say, moreover, with respect to small organs as well as large ones, the more perfect a voice is at the outset of its education, the less it will grow. The reasons are clear, and there are few exceptions to this rule. For where there are no obstacles, no such greater flow of sound can be expected as naturally occurs, when obstacles in faultier voices disappear. Where the resonance is not interfered with, its volume cannot be increased surprisingly. Where no faults exist, excellences cannot be substituted. With such

perfect organs the work consists less in building up than in refining and adjusting. But the owners of smaller voices need not repine; not all plants can be palms or beech-trees. Nature provides the lesser growth, too, and often endows it with infinite loveliness. It is our own fault that we think the biggest hall, seating eight thousand people, and operatic work of the most dramatic stamp, the foremost and most desirable conditions for art. Much exquisite talent perishes by the roadside from neglect or ill-directed striving.

## PART II: PRACTICAL HINTS

### CHAPTER IV

#### On "Practising"

I HAVE heard it said, and have seen it written over the signature of eminent authorities, that the voice, even under the most adverse physical conditions, can be made to do its work properly, *provided that you work it enough*.

That is too sweeping and too harmful an assertion to let pass unchallenged. Those persons who advocate such a general law, have never been seriously affected by catarrhal troubles, by inflamed vocal cords, by a malignant laryngitis or bronchitis, by nervous shocks and local debilities, or by any equally severe disturbances. Their throat has always been "well enough to sing," *in spite* of certain local troubles. You may wake up with a stiff neck, an aching wrist, a painful ankle. After moving the aching joint for some time, suppleness returns and pain disappears. So far, so good. But if your whole system were rheumatic, or if you had the slightest touch

of inflammatory rheumatism, this simple remedy would *not* work. So it is with the voice. I am quite of the opinion that one can never know in the morning what one's voice will be, until after trial practice. It may be like a misty, foggy autumn morning which clears up with the rising sun at noon, and proves a brilliant afternoon and evening. Too clear a voice may be followed by a change for the worse later in the day. But there are complications of the throat in which the use of the voice produces downright pain, in which the larynx is so clogged with impurities and its resonance so hopelessly interfered with, that it is not only folly, but wickedness, to force tones out of the vocal apparatus.

I give this rule: However bad your voice may appear, practise judiciously for a while, as though it were in its normal condition, only more carefully. Should you find after about ten minutes, or after repeated brief attempts, that the voice is getting more hoarse and more cloudy, let it rest—for the day. If it clears, go on practising carefully. You may exercise the lameness and all impurities away. But continue practising under *no* circumstances, if you feel any pain or discomfort whatsoever. "Born to be a singer" is one whose "instrument" is not easily dis-

ordered down to the core, or whose organ reacts after two or three days' indisposition.\*

The times are past, fortunately, when even eminent laryngologists "touched" (*burned*) the students' vocal cords with nitric acid and told them to sing in three hours' time; when they painted the patients' throats with tannin and iodine in the afternoon, and sent them to perform in concert the self-same night. And never, even at the present time, has it been insisted upon sufficiently, that disturbances in *any* part of the mucous membrane, whether of nose, mouth, nasal cavities, pharynx—or below, in the bronchial or digestive organs—react unavoidably upon the tone, are allied in close sympathy with the larynx itself; excepting those unusual cases, when the voice is placed "like an independent instrument" in a singer's throat.

It is better that caustic and knife should not be used *for singers* upon the infinitely delicate vocal organ, except in severe cases. If you have "throat

\*A few years ago a most admired artist whom I knew was thrown from her bicycle by a passing carriage. She was considered in danger from concussion of the brain one entire night, with symptoms of severe vomiting for eighteen hours. Yet she appeared in a principal rôle at a gala opera, on the third day after the accident. What ordinary mortal would have had any voice under such circumstances?

trouble," judicious exercise is almost always the best medicine. *Absolute silence*, so often prescribed, simply hides, but does not remedy, the evil, which crops out anew "with use." Unless you find a careful person to watch your "exercising," you should be your best and foremost judge, for you *feel* best what is harmful and what seems comfortable. The comfortable is allowed and helpful; no strain, no reaching, assists in any wise.

#### ON THE MANNER OF ELEMENTARY TONE-STUDY

In almost all methods and in most talks about practising the pupil is told to begin with long notes:



Doubting the wisdom of studying such notes at all as an elementary exercise, I beg to take serious exception to it when the pupil is supposed to execute them over the whole extent of his compass, as is frequently done. No bird begins his flying exercises by "hovering" like a falcon or an albatross with outstretched wings. The so-called "messa di voce" passes through all gradations of force, *pp-ff-pp*, *crescendo* and *de-*

*crescendo*. It requires, therefore, the most perfect balance of breath, the utmost nicety of pitch, the purest tone, a consummate elasticity of all muscles, such as only *long*, judicious practice can give; qualities, in short, which, even singly, no beginner *can* possess. Ten or twelve notes thus performed are all an average larynx can stand, at the beginning, without fatigue. It is *ruinous* to strain young voices with an exercise which lames the throat more quickly than any other.

Equally injudicious I have always found the persistent dwelling on a few middle notes, especially with the idea of strengthening them. And yet it is a practice on which many a voice-educator prides himself. Middle notes, especially the lower ones, are rarely the best among the young. On the contrary, their concentration is less easy and they take more breath than the higher or lower steps. To use them persistently, works them threadbare, takes their bloom, their "quality" from them. Here more than with anything else in the voice nature works her wonders in a quiet way, adding cell to cell, fibre to fibre. Maturing age is quite as important a factor here, as with the shoot of a plant. *Do not force power there*. It will develop calmly and inevitably, if your general voice-emission is but rightly placed. Employ first





Panseron, in some of his cadences, has united a few long drawn-out notes with examples of execution. But for the *combination* of perfect, sustained tone with agility, strangely enough, sufficient exercises have not been written. Yet in them lies the key to enrich a light *coloratura* voice, and to make limber a heavy, sluggish organ.

I shall subjoin a few instances of what I mean, instances born of the need of the moment, examples that could be varied a hundredfold to the utmost advantage of the student. Intentionally, no rhythm is prescribed.





Sing the following exercise with no breath attack between the notes, striking them *forte* and quite instantaneously, yet comparing always the degree of strength.



Sing the following with a bell-like repetition:



and so on, in an infinite variety of combinations.

This page contains ten staves of musical notation, likely for a piano or violin. The notation is written in treble clef and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The piece is titled "ON 'PRACTISING'" and is numbered IV on the left and III on the right. The notation is arranged in a single column, with each staff containing a line of music. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamic markings such as *pp*, *p*, *f*, and *ppp* are used throughout the piece. The notation is written in a clear, legible style, with a focus on the melodic and rhythmic elements of the music.

For the beginner I imagine a mode of *tone-practising* somewhat like the following:

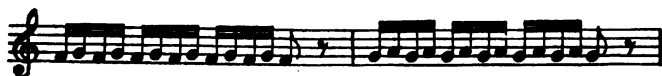
(1) Take a few long (silent) breaths.

(2) Sing *ligature* and *portamenti* (*legato* and slurred groups) on neighbouring intervals



avoiding extreme high or low notes.

(3) For the foregoing exercise substitute at once its somewhat rapidly moving counterpart:



and



(4) Swell tones on all *easy* notes of your register.



(5) Sing scales easily up and down, not only on a vowel resembling *A*, but also on any vowel, or mixture of vowels, which permits ease and sweetness of tone.

[illegible]

**Do not forget to control your attack.**

(6) Remember, that in this and all preceding exercises any *roughness* which seems to creep in at the "edges" of the tone is often but the result of awkwardness, of uncertainty, of *too little breath* setting the cords in motion. Gently push the breath a little more, and *never rasp your throat* to clear it. Then—*rest* a little while.

(7) 

**with its inversion :**

and



help to extend the compass and to bring out a certain fullness. (Never *press* your lower notes in this exercise!)

(9) Then study your *vocalise* with little tone, but with the utmost precision as to rhythm and intervals. It is often very difficult to correct faults that have crept in by inattention. When you know "both tune and time," your attention may be directed to the *manner* in which you sing the vocalise, *i. e.*, to evenness, roundness, shading, expression and phrasing (breath-division).

Nothing, except straining for power and high notes, tires the throat as much as singing "with uncertainty." Instead of letting the muscles assume at once the shape demanded by each precise tone, you subject them to constant suspense and adjustment, to aimless pulling and equally aimless relaxation, as long as your brain or throat is "hunting" for the note.

A singer should take some physical exercise in the intervals between practice-hours, chiefly such as will take him into the open air. He should walk a good deal, thus redistributing blood and elasticity through the entire system; yet always without effort or violence.

(10) For the second practice-period the beginner should repeat briefly most of the points of the first, dwelling, however, chiefly upon the best and most comfortable of those exercises. For in so doing he increases volume, ease and assurance as a preparation for the other studies. Those who have advanced to the study of song, may leave those exercises aside and begin, after sounding a few chords, at once the study of song or aria, at first with subdued, later with full voice. Toward the end of such practice any difficulties, musical or vocal, may again be rehearsed, singly and briefly, which had proved obstinate in earlier hours. On the whole, not more than an hour and a half, rarely two hours, should be employed vocally by a young student.

(11) If there be a *third* practice, with the advanced pupil, let it be one of repetition or of *répertoire*.

#### LOOKS

I have always found that the notes which sounded best, also made the singer look his or her best, unquestionably. It is unavoidable that any first attempts at loosening the jaw, of controlling the tongue, of disposing of the lips, etc., seem to impose a complete mask (and sometimes an unbecoming one)



upon the young singer's face. But let him form "the habit." The lines of constraint will turn to lines of beauty. And let us confess that, if facial beauty adds its power to vocal beauty, the effect is much more than double.

That you are to stand in an easy, graceful posture, goes without saying. But be severe with yourself at the outset about twisting your watch-chain, fumbling in your pockets, jingling trinkets, disturbing eyeglasses and hair, or whatever habits your nervous disposition may develop. All this looks badly and, as long as you have any such habits, they detract. They prove that you do not stand "above your subject."

A woman may hold herself rather tightly drawn in at the waist, but her chest should be free to expand to its fullest. *Leave the shoulders alone.* No forward or upward movement of them! A man should never feel any restraint about his body; he should especially see that his collar be larger than for ordinary use. Our muscles swell inordinately when we are singing. If you will but gently press the sides of your throat (not of your larynx) with your fingers, you will see what an amazing amount of resonance is lost at once. The linen collar would do the same. Moreover, the impeded circulation pro-

duces physical discomfort, useless strain, and sometimes vertigo.

#### THE "GRAND SCALE"

I have heard the use of the "Grand Scale" (Grosse Scala) recommended by the highest authority as a great benefit, if not the *greatest* benefit; that is, to sing with the whole extent of one's breath-power, with all the fullness at one's command, and through the entire compass; but beginning and ending each exercise softly:



upward and downward. Each group of notes is supposed to exhaust completely the resources of chest and larynx.


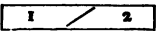
I own that I have little faith in the benefit of this exercise as a voice-building and voice-limbering factor (these seem to me the two poles of primal vocal education), but am rather convinced of the contrary.

Use it, when your voice has grown resistant, *when you are well advanced*, as a VOICE-CONTROLLER. There let its office stop. Only a ripe artist has so far command of his or her muscles as not to fatigue enormously the vocal apparatus thus stretched to its utmost *all the time*. Only such can "move up," progress from tone to tone, adjusting with infinite nicety the small, but most necessary changes in muscle and resonance which the "diatonic step" requires. Any other singer will *drag* the notes and force muscles out of position.

I have found the exercise most fatal to pitch. It is wearying in the extreme. Furthermore, it compels one to "break"—another disadvantage. It allows no adjustment of register while going in full power

from tones like  or  (in the fe-

male voice); for to join well, one has to soften the two respective ends. A joiner does not glue two pieces of wood together in this way (horizontally):

 if they are intended to carry any weight. He must make a "scarf-joint"  so as to "hold." *Do the same with registers.*

The "Grand Scale" will show you, inexorably, where your voice has a weakness and where your

physical power has limits. It is a *magic mirror*. But I do not advise it as a regular panacea, particularly for beginners. Those whom I have heard employ the Grand Scale advantageously, had beautiful and unusual voices from the outset.

#### ARPEGGIOS

In the practice of ascending chords



and, in fact, in the practice of any intervals rising from a lower level to the higher range care should be taken that all notes preceding the highest one should be some degrees less loud than the culminating note. Some people might say: Take each lower step on an exact line with the following, the higher one. I prefer to give you simply the idea of the "swing" or

the "leap," to suggest to you the feeling of lifting or rising. *Remain elastic.* Keep all your powers in reserve, ready for the swing into the high note.

In the second exercise (2) care should also be taken to sound the first *descending* note in the same manner as the highest note of the group. It will always have a tendency to "fall back in your throat." Keep it in similar position of resonance.

Of course, if you sing very softly (*pp*), very loud (*ff*), or with strong accentuation (*martellato*:



etc.), these rules do not hold good, for then the notes are put *intentionally* in line.

Similar attention should be paid to broad "scales."

#### HIGH TONES (FILATO: FLOATING, SPUN TONES)

The high, sustained tones—without any shading, consequently without any noticeable management of breath—should never "go hungry." Once struck, they should be held with a *constant* supply of breath (as if a glass ball, a small electric light, were held at the end of a long slender stick, outward, upward, forward), until the composer tells you to "go on," or until the tone "ceases." If a tone stops thus nat-

urally—as it were “by itself”—it always ends *well* and *properly*. There can then be no contraction of muscle, no cutting off of breath. The sound ceases or fades with softness and sweetness, yet while it lasts it requires quite as much mental effort and steady breath-support as a strong *forte* tone. The larynx, in such tones, has no more feeling of tension than as if it were an open window through which a breeze is passing, *i. e.*, absolutely none. The tongue (for *good* notes) again lies flat at the bottom of the mouth with a sort of groove in the middle. With some people the groove extends over the root of the tongue; with others, up to the utmost back of it.

I cannot repeat often enough that all pulling of the soft palate, pressing of the larynx, coercing of the tongue, etc., will never make one produce a proper tone. Let your muscles remain in an elastic state. For dramatic, powerful effects only you may harden them, for the instant, to forceful utterance.

#### RULES FOR DOUBLE VOWELS

If you have composite vowels, *i. e.*, those that change from one sound to another during their enunciation—in English, for instance, *ou* (like the Italian *a-u*), as in bound; *i* (like the Italian *a-i*), as in tie,

idle; *oi* (like the German *äu* or *eu*), as in loiter, joy—the tone, or the group of tones, should be sung on an almost pure *a* (Italian), to which, *at its very end*, is added the determining final sound. So you would sing

in German	in English
 <p>Sa - (i) te Sa - (ü) le Sa - (u) ber</p>	 <p>pra - (oo)dly; proudly ga - (i)ded; guided jaw - (y)ful; joyful</p>
 <p>Fra - (ü) de Fra - (i) helt Fra - (u) chen</p>	 <p>sa - (i)lent; silent ba - (u)er; bower taw - (y)ling; tolling</p>

The *modifying vowel* should not enter *with* the last note of the group, for “delightful,”



de - la - eet - ful

but should sound thus:



de - la - (ight) ful  
(wrong) de - la - eet - ful

#### PHRASING

“Phrasing” means (for the singer) the proper division of the entire melody by the breaths he has to

take and the distribution of light and shade in his expression.

"Light and shade" are mostly indicated by the composer. Many a time, however, they are left wholly to the taste of the performer. And there are certain things *absolutely understood* and never written down, in which the singer has to show refinement and personality. To such unwritten things belong the swelling of notes written with a *fermata* (pause, hold) :



the ending of verses in arias or songs, where the last note has to "die away" more or less, and where almost always the entire last phrase is considerably broadened. It is also understood, that the weaker beats of the measure, or brief notes following a longer one, are to be sung with about half the power of the principal tone:

*Romeo* (Bellini)





*Der Freischütz* (Weber)*Der Neugierige* (Schubert)

N. B.—Of course, you may occasionally want to produce, for a special effect, a line of unusual, absolute evenness, as in the following citations from “Adelaide” and *Don Giovanni*:

## Beethoven



## Mozart



but such a changeless level would soon end in monotony, if carried to excess.

## SLURS

To the unwritten marks belong also most *portamenti*, all the slight occasional slurrings from note to note; furthermore, the habit of varying the degree of power when phrases reappear too often unchanged. What stiffness would Brahms's

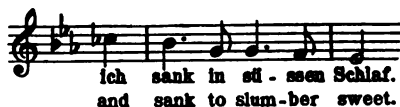


offer, if the three verses should contain nothing but square, "unbridged" steps? Giordano's



would sound angular, if this famous melody (which progresses almost entirely by diatonic steps) did not have some graceful *portamenti*.

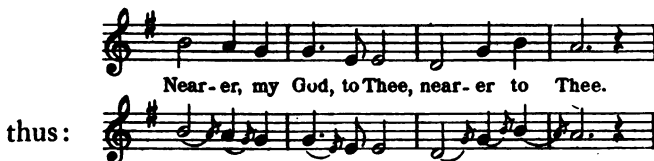
And when Elsa (in *Lohengrin*) begins her visionary recital



she can very well portray the situation with several slurs in succession; for one does not fall asleep as one drops from a wall.

Individuality and quality of voice, in these cases, must unite with the good taste of the singer to preserve a certain purity of style and to guard against maudlin dragging.

Whoever has heard a fervent congregation sing:



knows what the excessive use of *portamenti* can lead to. Abuse of upward slurs is even more vulgar than that of downward movement. It requires the same degree of energy to sing simply and purely, as to hold oneself straight, to walk erect, and not to slouch.

I have found two simple rules exceedingly useful:

1. Do not use *two portamenti* in succession. There are but rare exceptions.
2. Be sparing in the *upward* use of the slur, especially when notes are close together—in diatonic or chromatic steps.

That there are exceptions to these rules, as to all rules except mathematical ones, will be understood. Anguish, for instance, *requires* the dragging of the sound, and an occasional "sweep" between diatonic steps can be immensely effective. Again, a fermata *without any shading whatsoever*,



presenting a rigidly held tone, can serve as telling contrast. Pure style can be transmitted only by good example and good teaching. With such guides, and the composer's marking, one cannot go far astray. But about the "breaths in phrasing," volumes could be written.

#### BREATHS

By tacit understanding, the vocalist may subtract from the time-value (*not from the rhythm*) of *any* note for the purposes of "breathing." As most songs and arias will show you, the length of the musical *vocal* phrase is generally four measures. However, it is only in quick time and on certain not too frequent, and rarely consecutive, occasions in slower movements, that our physical limitations grant us those four measures. Therefore, we also have to breathe at *subdivisions*—roughly speaking, in every other measure. Now, if you find a "rest"



your place seems appointed. But there are any number of songs, and whole sections of arias, where the composer did not write a single rest. Where are we to break the melodic thread?

In vocalises (*i. e.*, studies without words) advice is not quite simple to give, though a number of rules exist.

(1) You may *not* breathe on bar-divisions, unless the melody begins with the "down-beat."\*

(2) Do not breathe unnecessarily before the highest notes of a phrase. You may do so, if they be accented or syncopated, or enter after sufficient preparation for the larynx.

(3) Breathe preferably *after*, and not *on*, accented beats, unless they begin phrases, or parts of phrases.

(4) In all cases where figures are joined to long notes, see whether the figure is, as it were, the tail, the finishing of the long note, the "scattering" of the single note into a number of more brilliant particles, or a group in itself leading to something else. In the former case the breath cannot separate long note and figure, while in other cases one breathes preferably after the longer notes.

\*Every singer should know that in *common* time the down-beat is on the first count, the next heavy beat coming on "three." In all rhythms divisible by *three* (3-4—6-8—9-8—12-8) the first of each group of *three* ("one" in each measure counts always as the principal) is the heaviest, the down-beat.

*Query:* Could one breathe after the long note in the following phrase?



*Answer:* No. The short notes evidently form the "tail."

And so on. One should not forget that many vocalises have been written by superior vocal masters who were but indifferent composers and wrote badly constructed phrases. Thus rules are broken and superseded so many times, that a pupil cannot judge independently at all. But we, as singers, have principally to deal with *words*; therefore I say:

Educate your pupil to be a grammatically speaking and grammatically *thinking* individuality. More than three-fourths of the "breaths" will then be apparent to him at once.

We take it for granted that you know that phrases like the following cannot be separated under any circumstances:

Of my father.—From broadly spreading arches.—  
Eternity's silence.—You should have conquered.—  
Will you cease trembling ever?—

A union of (I) preposition { article  
personal pronoun } substantive  
adjective }

Against the tree

Beyond his power

From flying clouds

(II) of adverb and adjective; adjective and substantive

Profoundly peaceful

Perfumed breezes

(III) of verb auxiliary and verb final in all its forms

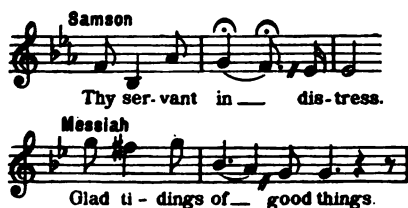
Shall not be beheaded

May be singing

Could have departed

Must arrive

cannot be severed. The one exception which I make and even advise to make, is in many of the slow arias in the works of Händel and his contemporaries.



In the first instance, the contralti will always find

themselves short of breath in their middle notes



, and yet they have to "make a point."

In the second instance, a breath after "tidings" would be awkward indeed. One should carry it over

to "of," and breathe for the two weak notes



Here I state one rule, for either opera or oratorio: *The first time a phrase occurs, be sure to breathe according to grammar, the following times according to musical requirements.* For the hearer has now received the intelligent communication. The composer, in most cases, uses the words over and over again only to spin out his musical ideas. Breathe, therefore, in a phrase *once* (preferably the very *first* time it occurs) properly according to sense. When the composer later requires display of voice, pyrotechnics, melismas and passage-work, breathe according to these new necessities. The words then have ceased to be of prime importance. They must not be done violence to, but they sink back into second rank.

Another rule. If any set of words:

in rolling, mountainous masses,



the heavens, clouds, constellations

I saw him tremble, fall, expire.

permit of inserting a comma, your breath can enter everywhere. Whenever the composer repeats *any* word: "Give me but freedom, freedom," the breath is almost obligatory.

If, in the great Juno aria in Händel's *Semele*, one does not break the phrase



by taking a breath between repeated words, one omits doing so only because the phrases are so very short and bounded, moreover, on both sides by rests. Too much breath is more disturbing than helpful.

You *can* breathe between subject-verb-object—unless the subject or object be a personal pronoun, consequently too brief a word—no matter how short or how extended each separate group may be.

You *ought* to breathe after most ejaculations, unless the composer has drawn them intentionally into his melody, as in the following:

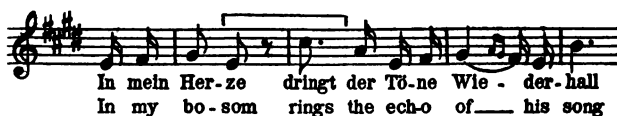


or the commencement of Beethoven's "Ah, perfido!"

There are rests on which one ought *not* to breathe; because they are meant only as silences, as "stops" in the *cantabile*, for greater emphasis of diction. Wagner is especially prolific in this kind of rest:



Strauss imitates him frequently in this. But with Franz we find similar cases in his daintiest movements:

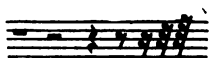


These silences, one might almost say "reticences," can be made of exquisite effect, almost as if withholding an endearing word or suppressing a smile. Musi-

cal literature is rich in these sudden "flights of tone into space."

#### BREATH-BRIDGES

A legitimate and much neglected effect a singer can and *should* make in elevated style lies in the "filling in of rests." It is generally thought that the rest



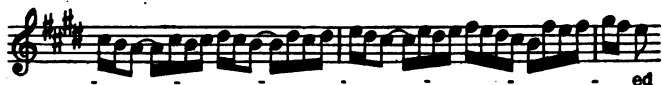
is a separation of phrases. In many cases, however, it no more signifies a separation than that of the two banks of a river which, *with* the river, form one whole. Or one may consider it like the division of the fingers which, taken together, help to form the hand.

A rest, though it extend over a measure or more, should also not be a physical collapse or a mental vacuity.

A certain grand singer, whom this generation has well known, possesses the art of "holding the public with her breath" in a consummate degree. From the instant that one phrase ceases, her body begins to prepare slowly, almost imperceptibly, for the coming one. At *any* instant this artist is in some degree able to recommence, never in the uninteresting state of "doing nothing," but ever retaining a wonderful poise. The face participates in the ceaseless current of gentle effort. This science seems almost disre-

garded. To most singers the thought of it has, perhaps, never occurred. Some vocalists might be too indifferent to adopt it. But, apart from the advantage of "having your public always with you," one truth is certain: "Where you *are*, you need not *put* yourself by an effort." By "connecting with your breath," by building these "breath-bridges," you endow your phrase with the same colour, with the same spirit, in which the previous one closed. You need not "pick it up" again; the evenness of your rendering stands assured. The difference in artistic level is astonishing and satisfying.

Of the "double breath" I have spoken before. While on many occasions it is of great importance and assistance, one needs it principally for Händel. Let us take the first aria in *The Messiah*. After the breath-exhausting passage



after only three-eighths' rest, comes the brief phrase:

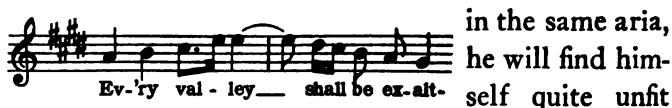


For this new phrase one can with difficulty get one's breath down

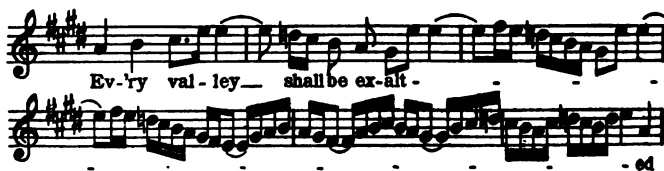
into one's lower lungs, and yet, again after only three-eighths' rest, comes the long, trying colorature:



Several measures *before* one has to begin such phrases, a *superabundance* of breath should be taken *which must not be used up*, but held as much as possible in reserve. *Upon* (on top of) this breath you take the second, briefer one, which the moment allows. You thus have a "double breath" ready. If the tenor waits to supply himself until the phrase



in the same aria, he will find himself quite unfit when arriving at the end of the passage



His breath-supply should be laid in during the long, opportune silence before



*All* florid passages—with three or four exceptions—in Händel are meant to be sung in one breath. All my pupils, trained with this end in view, must be able to execute them in *full voice* with unerring certainty. If you learn to “shade” these *coloratura*-embellishments, you save, with a wise employment of *crescendo* and *p*, much force and breath, and *will never get exhausted*. Of course, all this cannot be done without *energy*.

Many of the famous Händel contralto arias in opera or oratorio present the same difficulty—and its solution. The same rule holds good in arias like “Let the bright Seraphim,” or “Rejoice greatly.” Two passages in “I know that my Redeemer liveth” fall under the head of the few exceptions, if sung in the traditional slow movement.

The rule, therefore, is: “Provide breath at a *seasonable* time. Do not take it only just when you need it. Have a breath-reserve.”

I have made it a rule to teach:

Do not compel yourself needlessly to take two long, unbroken phrases *in succession*. Break *one* of them by a convenient breath. There are great ar-

tists who will achieve two, and even more, long phrases in unbroken succession. The general singer can *not*; he *need* not do so. *If* you carry your breath in this wise, you will handicap yourself for the ensuing portion of the number. These *tours de force* will not pay. Nature has set her limits. Retain your elasticity by *not* carrying two or more long phrases without breaking the alternate ones by convenient breaths.



#### PROLONGED NOTES

In places where sustained notes, to an accompaniment often varied and powerful, are carried through several measures, the singer should begin the prolonged notes softly, no matter what the accompaniment may be. *Very* rarely is a long-sustained, loud tone to be used. That possibility depends wholly upon individual breath-capacity. It will always be a surprise and a delight to the hearer, when toward the end (when no one anticipates any hidden resources) the tone begins to swell and to assert itself above the accompaniment, orchestral or otherwise. Such places

*Messiah* (Händel)  
Contralto Aria



in - to the high moon - - - tains

*Samson* (Händel)  
Air of Micah



his might-y griefs re - dress

*Don Giovanni*  
(Mozart)  
Don Ottavio



a ven-di-car lo - va - - do

emerge from the sounds of the orchestra, as a swimmer would from the waves.—A word of counsel:

1. If one has a *high* note to hold (the accompaniment being *under* one's note), no effort is needed. Even a floating, soft tone will dominate and "carry."

2. If one has a *middle* note to hold (the accompaniment being all *around* one's note), the tone should be steady, like the stick which upholds a luxuriant shrub.

3. If one has a *low* note to prolong (the accompaniment being *above* your tone), it should be loud and rich, for it has to uphold the fabric of the accompaniment as the foundation upholds a house.



## CHAPTER V

### Supplementary Observations

IF we are at liberty to abbreviate, for breath's sake, *any* note at the end of a phrase, or a division of it, why should we not be permitted to deduct an atom from its commencement—at least, if the comfort and beauty of the phrase can be saved by that means only? To be sure, such a “hesitation” must never take place when any rhythmical accent is demanded for the entrance of the word. But it *may* occur when the accompaniment goes quietly on its way, *disguising* the delay of the entrance. No one who has struggled with such passages will ever forget the benefit accruing to him from an ♩, a ♪, or even a ♫ rest. The human lungs can take in an amazing amount of air in a very brief time, when the air-passages are already open and at work. Certainly it cannot matter—with all the *rubato* singers take and are *compelled* to take—whether once in a thousand phrases the entrance may be an instant late; if only the rest proceed with exactitude. (Example from *The Messiah*.)



or in the same aria



#### DIFFICULT PHRASING

There are places *which never can be done easily*. All trying will never lessen nor conquer the difficulty in question. (I am speaking here only of difficulties in *breaths*.)

There is Schumann's "Dichterliebe," for instance. In its very first song the phrases are simple, flowing, and quite brief—of scarcely two short measures each. Yet who does not find the last two notes of



Da ist in meinem (1) Herzen die Lie-be auf-ge-gan-gen.  
 Da hab' ich ihr ge-(2) standen mein Seh-nen und Ver-lan-gen.  
 (con-fess-ing my pas-sion and my long-ing.)

exceedingly difficult to manage, whether in the original or in lower editions? Whatever reasons could be given . . . the simple little phrase will never "feel comfortable."

In Franz's well-known "Aus meinen grossen Schmerzen" you have three wee phrases in two-four time, followed by:



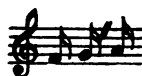
und flat-tern nach ih - rem Her - zen. Sie

One would think that singers to whom the most important oratorio and operatic arias offer no difficulty whatsoever, would not even "consider" the Franz phrase. Yet vainly the student tries to encompass it in one breath. The phrase remains obstinate. You *must* breathe before "Herzen." If you sing the passage without the author's marking (*i. e.*, devoid of colour), you may achieve it. But the entire value of the song lies precisely in its expression, and the *crève-cœur* of breathing after a personal pronoun (here of two syllables) seems to me the lesser sacrifice. Moreover, it would occur before a repetition of the same note.

Another of the seemingly simple, yet disheartening, phrases is in "Es hat die Rose" ("The rose complained") :



You *can* sing it in one breath, but then with absence of all tone-charm and all due sentiment of the words. There is no means but to make a strong *rubato* (*ritardando*) on "Lenz" and take a distinct breath after the high *F*. In the second verse, still more awkward, I advise to emphasize broadly the first three brief notes



which affords a chance to "steal" another *half*-breath for the now uninterrupted ending.

In Franz's "Stille Sicherheit" the last two measures will *ever* find you short of breath for a "triumphant ending." The reason evidently lies in the ascending



in the last measure but one. Substitute



as an exercise occasionally, and you will find how much more *resistance* the higher note gives you.

Wagner's introduction to Elizabeth's prayer:



does seem the simplest of beginnings, but (because of certain consonants, or the change in register?) the intended splendour of a "large phrase" ends almost always in an "abbreviation." Only unusual voices can make it ring out reposefully.

Schubert's ending of the wonderful tone-picture "Der Doppelgänger," offers another striking example.



Wherein lies the enormous difficulty of adjusting one's breath for those few notes? One's heart should seem to break here in an outburst of convulsive, uncontrollable weeping; and yet the breath al-

lows barely the expression of "an introspective tenderness of memory."

The matter is worse in the concluding phrase of "Mignon's Song,"



The accompaniment moves in *ff*. One cannot breathe during the last three words, especially after having already taken breath twice, before "und" and "ein." The end is next to impossible for the average singer, unless she do violence to the diction. But wherever you breathe, do so *with authority*, not with a "make-shift breath"; and this in *all* cases where you are compelled to do so. The hearer then will always bow to your authority.

In Händel's *Semele* the great scene of Juno brings the contralto to the splendid ending, "The wakeful dragon's eyes":



Rules forbid her breaking the phrase, but it must be done, and must be done in a queenly, imperious way. Here she *makes* her own law. And the *more* she *retards* here, the heavier and more unyielding

her notes roll out, the greater the effect will be which portrays at once Juno's implacable hate, her resistless power, and the monstrous "dragon of sleep."

It seems an absurdity to overcharge a simple song with a superabundance of "breath"; but Brahms's "Minnelied" offers a fair example. In the final phrase



you have the choice of breathing, according to rule, before *mög'*, perhaps also before *blühen*, thus finishing the song in a listless, ineffective fashion, or of overcharging the phrase with breath. In the latter case (remember, there are no rests, and only eighth-notes after which to snatch a breath) you breathe *deeply* before *mög'*; *steal* a breath immediately after *mög'*, and finish with a large, authoritative inspiration before *blühen*. You have *built up* your finale by this means;




can now be thrown out in emotional richness, and



can portray every thing in the word and the song. But it cannot be done in any other way. If you take the final phrase singly, yes; in connection with the entire song, no.

#### THE RUBATO

In music we have to distinguish between the hold (fermata ) over a single note—sometimes (very infrequently) over a small group of notes,



and the slackening of rhythm in entire phrases, or parts of them, as indicated by the various terms *ritardando*, *morendo*, *rallentando*, *languendo*, etc.

In the first case the measure is interfered with only during the beat, or beats, indicated. In the second, *all* notes, rests and figures are drawn out, as if written on an elastic band, prolonged according to the taste of the performer, until the composer bids him return to measured rhythm by the direction *a tempo*. In this, Schumann alone seems to make an exception. He writes the *ritard.*, but leaves the return to rhythmic movement to the musical sentiment of the performer. The hold, therefore, has its precise position and limit; the *ritard.* has more or less vague outlines and depends, in a degree, upon the individual executant. Now, if you also imagine the *antithesis*



of *ritardando* (i. e., the *accelerating* movement—*accelerando*, *stringendo*, *affrettando*, etc.) to be like ebb and flow produced by the soloist, you have the condition of *rubato*, this exquisitely swaying, charming play with strict rhythm. In a *rubato*, however, one should consider it a fixed law that the bass, the pillar of harmony, lets the rhythm proceed *with regularity* while the sway of the upper part (whether of melody or figure-work) has perfect freedom of movement, *if it but return at the proper moment* to meet the strict rhythm at the appointed place.

Here we may be allowed to tell the oft-repeated story of the operatic bass-drum player. For upwards of thirty years he had been playing his part impeccably. But he felt so sure of himself and of his conductor, that at certain points in old operas he used to slip out from his seat near the stage door, and, counting all the while his 100 or 200 odd bars, imbibe some little refreshment adapted to his advancing years. He had never failed to slip back at the proper moment and to score an effect with a sonorous "bang!" So the conductor paid no heed to him. But a certain great tenor one day appeared as a "guest." Now, while all the other artists carried out their *rubato*, letting the conductor proceed steadily with his rhythm, this tenor could only "retard" and

"drag." And when the drum-player slipped in, hearing a snatch of melody resembling his cue, his "bang!" came 24 bars too early, the performance was drowned in a roar of laughter, and the tenor departed indignant, never to return.

Chopin, in some *Nocturnes* and in the *Larghetto* of his piano-concerto in *E* minor, is the master, the very creator of the instrumental *rubato*. Almost every *coloratura* singer, not being a machine, is unconsciously creating constant *rubato* opportunities. Sometimes you could learn the perfection of *rubato*-diction from the shallowest of couplet-performers at a variety-show—but the latter have nothing to do with the art of *song*.

#### THE TREMOLO

What causes a tremolo is quite as obscure as the liking certain people, or nations, have for it, which goes so far that they *cultivate* it. Any intermittent, unsteady sound has no place in music, except in the drums, the *Vox humana* stop in the organ, and (vocally) in the expression of passion, fear or grief.

It would be a comparatively easy matter to explain and correct the habit, if the tremolo were caused only by a surplus of breath pressing unduly upon the vocal cords. That may be *one* of the causes; but this ex-

planation does not lay bare the root of the evil conditions. Nor does a tremolo always result from previous strains, or indicate a diseased state of the organ. An exaggerated tremulousness, even a real tremolo, often exists in voices which have suffered no strain whatsoever. There are people with strong and healthy organs who have it as a fundamental quality; yet, never having heard singers with a tremolo, they could not have acquired it by imitation. It remains an open question whether it is the ligaments between the ribs (consequently the breathing-apparatus alone), or a weak and nervous diaphragm, that creates the tremolo; whether a larynx supported on the too yielding cartilages of the wind-pipe, or the weakness of parts to which the vocal cords are directly attached, is its cause; whether the cords themselves, or the unsteady condition of the root of the tongue, produces the tone-vibration. In many cases it cannot be the "push of breath," for the less forcibly these singers emit their voices, the worse their tremolo. Some students who have come under my observation almost lost their tremolo, in which the tongue visibly oscillated to and fro with every vibration of the tone. Some were helped by a conscious stiffening of the portions around the larynx; others have succeeded by controlling the breath-power. But, in

general, the radical extirpation of a real tremolo is a toilsome and well-nigh hopeless task. For any excitement or indisposition may restore the old conditions.

We must distinguish, however, between two kinds of tremolo: the one which, under the influence of power and passion, stiffens into marble-like rigidity, as wet plaster of Paris or cement takes the hardness of stone; the other in which every additional effort adds but a new element of weakness. To the first category belonged some of the most memorable voices I have known. They seemed somewhat "top-heavy," like a big flower on too slender a stalk; but in forceful accents, like those of Fides or Brünnhilde, they turned into a sort of petrified fibre, into a thing of crushing power and clarion-like clearness. It is impossible for me to class such organs among the "degenerate" or "objectionable" ones.

The second tremolo, the truly bad one, is the condition when, with increasing loudness of the tone, the shaking becomes more violent; when all *forte* passages and all dramatic exclamations are like the fluttering of a pennant in the breeze; when no resistance is possible and not one muscle can be kept in its place. Whether those symptoms are curable, even in part, is a difficult matter to decide. For such singers have

begun to love that intermittent tone, and consider it their birthright, much as certain violinists will "wabble" with their fingers on every sustained note—as if the *bowing* were not the soul-giving part of violin-playing!

Remedies there are none against the tremolo except controlling every part of the voice-apparatus *in turn*, until the seat of the fault be discovered. And then—patience, and sometimes silence and intense attention—occasionally, a keen, impartial listener.

There are voices so pure, so clear, so inerrantly steady, that I could wish them *at times* a slight tremor of that kind. But it is harder for them to acquire even the slightest "thrill," than it is for the tremulous voice to grow into perfect steadiness.

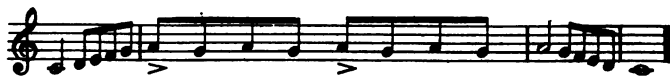
#### THE TRILL

In many methods there exist a number of exercises for the trill. Without saying so, they make the student believe that out of them will ultimately develop the regular trill, if you but "practise faithfully, and gradually accelerate the movement."

In my opinion the trill, as a muscular motion, has no more to do with the speed of scales or the rapidity of execution generally than as though it were pro-

duced by a different person. A rigid voice may possess it; a flexible one may be driven to despair by the impossibility of acquiring it. Of course, the teacher or artist can give his experiences only for what they are worth. By the following precepts I have at least ushered into existence a good many trills which could pass muster as *perfect whole- and half-tone* trills, both absolutely under the singer's control. For it should be said that a trill, with an audience, means such an infinite delight, that the best of singers soon forget that "justness," and not "rapidity," alone forms its artistic criterion. A trill may easily degenerate into a "shake," the interval of which may vary from a quarter of a tone to a major third. I have heard audiences wildly applaud the most absurd "shakes"—trills which literally "flung themselves" out of all place and throbbed with utterly nondescript intervals.

To *control* the space of a trill, exercises cannot be practised too attentively. Yet please remember, that you only *control the interval* and never, in this way, create the trill-movement. I would propose, as an elementary exercise:



Then double it into



and finally, with a gradual development of agility, you arrive at



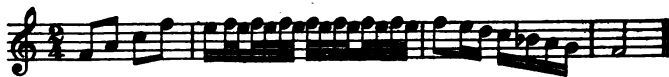
Let me say, again, that this will never "give" you the trill. It will *prepare* it, and will *control* it later when you are on the point of losing it again or of performing it with wrong intervals. An *absolute condition* in the practice of this simple exercise is,

that the alternation  be like the mechanical

falling of hammers in a piano, with no *legato* between the steps, but also no trace of air—like a piece of machinery. As doing so *in this exercise* with "half a tone" seems very difficult, I do not advise practising the minor mode:



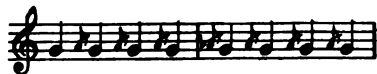
Two other exercises I have adopted are:



for the whole tone trill



Add to these the "beat" or "stroke"



and you have about what is needed as a preparation. But now comes the difficulty. Some great artists have said: "I can sing a trill only with an absolutely stiff throat. *Consequently*, all trills should be taught with a stiffly set throat." Another fine vocalist said: "I found my tongue vibrate back and forth with the trill. *Consequently*, the trill should be taught with a loose, vibrating tongue"—and the pupils make their tongues ache with gymnastics. One might cite numerous other instances. I would say: The trill is an absolutely individual thing. In this one should never force one's own way upon anyone else. One of the most brilliant *coloratura* sopranos has assured me, that after acquiring chromatic scales and arpeggios which were the despair of even Ilma de Murska, she still wept her eyes out "because the trill would not come." As a last expedient, she shut herself up with her canary-bird and watched his motions. She had a *wonderful* trill when I heard her—as an old lady.



Some people can trill better "from below," some *only* "from above," some find it possible only on *i*, others on *e*, some preferably on *a*; some only on head-notes, others again in the middle range. A teacher with acute perception can possibly discover the reason for such limitations. I believe that only the trill "from above" can be *taught*.

When the preparation appears sufficiently advanced, when the notes fall like little hammers, evenly, almost with a sort of "check," then I say, "Stop! Forget all this! Relax your throat absolutely; open it fairly wide and think of making the air *bubble* in your throat, making it *whirr*; never use an effort of holding anything; forget that you have muscles" . . . and now watch the moment when the trill-movement "breaks through." The first time it may come only for half a second—on one vowel only—on one single tone. The pupil who once has felt that joy, that freedom of a trill—something like a cork dancing on sunlit wavelets—will forget it as little as the one who has sung her first distinct head-tone. It now rests with pupil and master to multiply, to prolong those occasions—later, to transpose them. The "creation" of this movement does not resemble anything else; and therefore I repeat, it must be made a *surprise*. If the pupil once can "play with it," it is

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only a question of time as to what lengths you may extend it.


As Nature puts her limitations on the trill, it seems to me permissible to change a word on places which *must* have a trill. And some consummate artists have even changed the *place* of the trill required by transferring it to another effective note in the same phrase with such skill that the composer would have approved with delight.

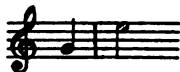
#### TRANSPOSITION

How far does the right to transpose a song or an aria extend?

It is difficult to state a limitation. One would not transpose a warbling bird-song by Taubert into a deep contralto, nor Händel's "Shall I on Mamre's fertile plain" from the old man's bass into high tenor range. Schumann's "Mondnacht" (Moonlight), with its floating, shimmering high notes, would lose its charm and all its meaning by being transposed into low range; Saint-Saëns' "Amour, viens aider," would sound weak if raised into the soprano key. Transposition is allowable where the *atmosphere of the song* does not suffer, and as long as the voice-colour can still express the proper meaning of the composer.

Keys, in instrumental music, have different faces, and any singing except *a cappella* singing (*i. e.*, choral or concerted *unaccompanied* singing), must be classed under that head. The keys of D $\flat$  and C are no more alike to the sensitive ear than velvet drapery resembles straight white marble columns; the key of A $\flat$  bears a similar relation to that of A, as an evening in a wooded valley would bear to a noon hour on an open heath. We all know the incomparable impersonation of Mozart's Donna Anna by one of our greatest artists. Still, one of the highest artistic enjoyments one could have experienced was the singing of Mme. Fursch-Madi in the vengeance aria of *Don Giovanni*—in the key of C, one full tone lower. It seemed as if the soprano “in general” only in this key might unfold all her intensity, power of voice and diction, without straining. The composer's meaning might thus be made more evident, even

though the initial and repeated step from  could not be equalled in intensity by the more pastoral



The part of the “Queen of the Night” was written by Mozart for a special singer. I would always set



everything in the key of D $\flat$  *sharp*, yet remained perfectly in tune when singing the same number in C. Others flatted constantly in the key of C and were true beyond criticism half a tone lower, in B, or a tone higher, in D. Every conductor who trains in *a cappella* numbers choirs who have been accustomed to orchestral accompaniment, appreciates this difficulty. I will mention but one instance, Bruch's "Waldpsalm" (Forest Psalm) for six-part chorus. The composition keeps very much to its tonality of F, and moves in noble, splendid lines. What I have suffered in hearing my singers, though amply able to cope with far greater difficulties, lose their pitch here continuously and hopelessly, need not be said. I never succeeded, until I put the entire number *half a tone higher*, into F $\sharp$ . Instantly the intonation remained flawless (though the piece was now pitched very high). The chorus even declared "that it was much easier to sing in F $\sharp$ ." To me the simple explanation was, that all the C's and F's having formerly been sung with their respective lower registers, now became C $\sharp$ 's and F $\sharp$ 's, moving at once into the higher registers. From purely mechanical reasons, flattening became an impossibility. But better still: Practising the number in this wise a few times the throats forgot *to strain* and, on lowering the num-

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ber (or similar ones) later to their proper key, the tendency to sing false had vanished.

That big choral masses in all parts of the world drop in pitch nearly always, sometimes quite badly in the brief space of eight or ten measures, results from other conditions, *i. e.*, from want of exactitude in ascending intervals; and, for obvious reasons, this tendency cannot be eradicated where large bodies of singers enter into consideration.

## CHAPTER VI

### Some Remarks About Notation

#### ON SLURS

OUR musical notation is imperfect, and sometimes perplexing. Many attempts have been made during the last forty or fifty years to improve it. None have succeeded. The "slur" is one of the perplexities. For it means to the singer

*a.* Any prolongation of a note into the next measure.

*b.* Any lengthening of a note in the original measure which cannot be expressed by adding dots:

Example to 1a.



Example to 1b.



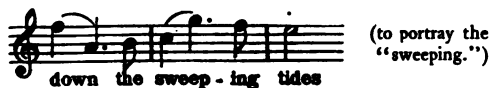
2. That two or more notes are to be sung on one syllable, quite apart from any *manner* of "joining."

Example to 2.



3. That two notes belong to *one* syllable and are *really* to be "slurred together."

Example to 3.



4. That two notes belonging to *different* syllables are to be slurred (*portamento*).

Example to 4.



5. That there be *no slurring at all* (!!), but only a grouping together of rhythmical figures like this (from Rubinstein) :





6a. That the composer desires to have the breath carried over fully to the next phrase (consequently, "no breathing").

b. That the composer desires to have the breath carried *up* to the next phrase, before which, however, a very quick breath should be taken (consequently, an *interrupted portamento* and a "breathing perforce"—its very opposite!).

Under a,



should sound like



But the same phrase, with the same notation, can also signify:



7. The slur indicates simply that its end is also the end of a phrase and that you may, or should, breathe where the slur ceases; it represents the *size* or *length* of the phrase.

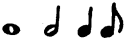

8. It is placed as a sign of "smoothness" over any number of measures, irrespective of breathing or slurring.

Some famous piano-teachers compel their pupils to lift their fingers off the keyboard *at the end of every slur*. I can vouch for almost all composers that such was not their intention, since to express such an intention slurs *and* staccato-marks should be written:



(Moreover, from purely mechanical reasons, slurs must end *somewhere*, even in the most continued "legato.")

N. B.—An abuse which I cannot understand has to be mentioned here.

When, for the advantage of the eye, notes of different values  are  (slurred, bound, tied) together, it is explicable. When



or



is written, no one could gainsay it. But why place slurs over groups *already bound together*:



The merest beginner knows that one should never "slur" quick figures, the principal charm of which should be *distinctness, clearness*.

And yet without exception one finds printed indiscriminately:



To be sure: When a series of *couplets* is placed under slurs,



it means *invariably* a "taking off" of the tone between each couplet *for instrumental music*. How far, or rather how little, that is possible in vocal music, can be tried in Verdi's "Caro nome" (*Rigoletto*):



That it is not meant *at all*—by Verdi—like instrumental execution, is proved by the next measure, where the “breaks” *really* occur:









On the whole, the slur as used nowadays is a most indefinite and often incorrect means of interpreting the composer's meaning.

To those who wish to disentangle a riddle in the significance of slurs I would point out an aria by one of the greatest voice-composers the world has known—Maestro Verdi. And his is but *one* instance.

Three staves of musical notation in treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and 8/8 time. The first staff has the lyrics 'Ce-le-ste A-i-da, for-ma di-vi-na, mi-sti-co' and 'Heavly A-i-da, vi-sion an-gel-ic, mis-tic-al'. The second staff has the lyrics 'rag-gio di lu-cee flor, del mio pen-sie-ro' and 'ra-diance of flower and light, of all my think-ing'. The third staff has the lyrics 'tu sei re-gl-na, tu di-ma vi-ta sei lo splen-dor.' and 'thou art the rul-er, thou of my be-ing the sole de-light.' The lyrics are written in Italian and English, with the English translation below the Italian.

(Translation made only to coincide exactly with the grammar of the Italian original.)

The slurs here cease mostly in impossible places, and finally do not permit any breaths at all, if one would obey rules of grammar and musical phrasing.

Why musicians have not invented, or adopted, different sorts of slur-marks for their different necessities, remains to me a riddle. One might easily employ the sign  (an angular slur) for purely rhythmical grouping, as shown here:  the *heavy* slur  for "sweeping" from tone to tone; the *light* or *thin* slur  for the mere delineation of the limits of phrases, for the "breaking off" of breaths;  for some other kind;  for something else; and so on. If no one has the courage to introduce such marks into the classic works already existing, surely there ought to be no difficulty now in introducing a more definite and *absolutely plain* system of indicating slurs for modern works, and compositions to come.

#### THE "GRUPPETTO," OR TURN

This is an ornament in music by which the melodic (principal) tone is made to mount first to its upper diatonic step, repeat itself, then descend to its lower neighbour and return; four notes following the principal one:



In olden times the fashion was to employ only diatonic steps, *i. e.*, the notes as they stood in the scale.

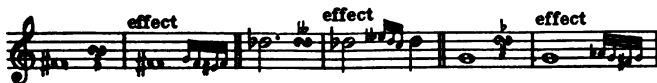
This made the turns have at times two whole steps, at times one step and a half, with the half-step variable as the scale demanded.



All early compositions require us to adhere to that law. In modern times any turn covering more space than a tone and a half goes against our feeling. We add suitable accidentals, if the key does not allow it.



Sometimes a composer wants but half a tone above and half a tone below. He only has to put in the needful accidentals.



(Such accidentals are not intended for the space in which they chance to be printed, but *always* for upper or lower auxiliary notes of the *Gruppetto*.)

All this about the *Gruppetto*, and much more, has been said countless times. But where I find singers continually stumbling, is in the rhythm of the turn. Let me propose the following simple solution, which will fit all cases:

1. If the turn is placed above or after a *plain* note

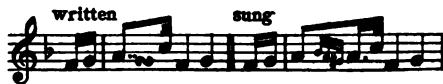


etc., it should glide smoothly over to the next melodic note, like a narrow ribbon connecting the two. The style of music decides whether the ornament is to be sung slowly or quickly.

2. If the turn occurs on or after a *dotted* note, the singer should make the turn between the note and its own dot, thus:



The dot thus becomes the last *accented* note of the turn, and reveals the beat.



## CHAPTER VII

### The Recitative

THE three components of musical composition are Rhythm, Melody and Harmony. The Recitative alone seems to proceed without regard to the union of these three parts. It occurs in the following styles:

- (1) The "recitativo secco," or *spoken* recitative.
- (2) The "recitative" pure and simple.
- (3) The "recitativo concertato," or recitative with a pronounced, characteristic accompaniment.

1. The spoken recitative (*recitativo secco*) originated in the lighter style of *Italian* opera, and does not occur in any other language except as an adaptation. If I could mention anything resembling it in northern literature, it would be the Gilbert-Sullivan "patter-song." But the *recitativo secco* moves so swiftly that it would often outstrip the spoken word into which it drops, at times, unawares. It has no "melody" at all. The few chords which sustain the singer's rapid flow of words are thrown in here and there, almost at random. Moreover, it requires no "voice," *i. e.*, no development of quality, power or



shading. It was employed to take the place of spoken dialogue between the set numbers, such as arias and ensembles of any kind. Only Italian singers seem to use it with a virtuosity and a rapidity beyond compare. The scores of *Don Giovanni* and of the lighter operas by Rossini furnish the best examples of it. At present the *recitativo secco* is dying out as a form of art.

2. The "recitative" pure and simple moves with perfect freedom of diction, but with more repose and often with occasional distinct and pleasing melodic steps. It has generally a continuous accompaniment, at times an interesting harmonic support. It expresses emotions, and rises even to tragic accents. The whole realm of story and the entire gamut of sentiment can find utterance in it. One need only look at Rossini's examples of recitative in *L'Italiana in Algieri*, which bubble over with fun and vivacity; at the grand recital of Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, where dramatic narrative, tenderness and intense passion are intermingled; at the scriptural readings and deeply felt soul-pictures in *The Messiah*; or at recitatives like that of the Contessa in *Le Nozze di Figaro*:



where we are led from the simplest, almost babbling talk to heights of indignation and distress approaching the tragic.

In all such recitatives, perfect freedom for the singer remains the law. When the tenor sings



in *The Messiah*, his utterances of profoundest grief are not trammelled by any thought of rhythm. The orchestral accompaniment never leaves the voice, but remains subordinate to the slightest changes of mood and diction, as if it were an atmosphere in which the singer was walking. Of course, "atmosphere" can also be disturbing, if one *will* walk against the tempest or lose oneself in mists. Therefore, it behooves the singer to phrase in such a way as not seriously to disturb the rhythmical possibilities of orchestral accompaniment, whether this continue in placid chords (as in many oratorios) or in broken, dashing fragments (as in more dramatic works).

3. The most effective recitative is the *concertato*—the one with characteristic, almost independent, accompaniment.

Beethoven's prelude to "Ah, perfido!"; Weber's exquisite introduction to "Wie nahte mir der Schlummer"



Gluck's masterful scenes in *Orfeo*, depicting despair and self-accusation; Händel's majestic "Awake, Saturnia!"; even brief stretches like the Queen's harangue in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, show the interplay of voice and accompaniment, of rhythm with rhythmical license, of gentle speech with passionate abandonment. And Haydn's inimitable orchestral pictures in *The Seasons* and *The Creation* show, in absolute perfection, what infinitely varied colours the musician may use to illustrate and diversify the apparently smooth descriptions of the singer in his *recitativo concertato*.

4. One finds in Wagner and in some earlier dramatic composers a seemingly free diction written to a well-measured, strictly continued accompaniment. I would not count such numbers or occasions as "recitatives" at all. Recitative means *entire* freedom from shackles of rhythm, or rhythms "changed at will" by the performer, for the time being. On that account the arts of *bel canto* and recitative are two distinct

branches of vocal art. There are some splendid vocal declaimers at the present day, who cannot sing properly one single phrase of *bel canto*; and *bel canto* singers who do not possess the first qualification for the free and dignified rendering of a recitative.

#### HINTS ON SINGING IN RECITATIVE

When a singer finds himself accompanied, in certain places, by abrupt, strong chords, he should not let his own phrases enter until the sound of the accompaniment has died away; neither should forceful chords be struck until the vocalist has finished his phrase. Lucidity of diction is a *sine qua non* in recitative, and should never be interfered with. Quite exceptionally, in bursts of energy, passion or exclamation, or *vice versa*, the voice can enter *f* with the final *f* chord. In this way the chord serves but as a reinforcement of the voice-power, and its coördination is legitimate, equally as in emphasizing a single word.

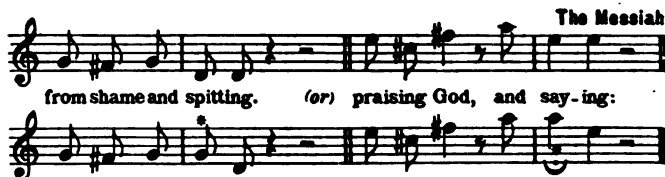
In olden times the rule of preserving  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{4}{4}$ , or  $\frac{6}{8}$  time during the entire piece was strictly adhered to. Therefore where passages occurred like this:



the chords were always to enter *after* "thee." Whether  $\frac{3}{4}$  may thus be lengthened into  $\frac{4}{4}$ , or common time into  $\frac{5}{4}$  or  $\frac{6}{4}$ , does not matter at all.

No one can tell precisely whence the habit arose of making certain appoggiaturas in a recitative—or why the appoggiatura *must* be made. Still less can anyone explain why they are now not printed as they should be sung. From a mistaken sense of respect? The rule, clearly given, is as follows: Whenever one finds, before a rest or a stop in a recitative, accented and unaccented syllables of the same word occurring on the same note, *the accented syllable is preferably raised one diatonic step (i.e., to the next tone above).*

Occasionally, too, this appoggiatura takes the following form:



The ear easily decides in such cases.

The rule holds good for most compositions until Schubert's time. The few exceptions do not disturb it. When, for instance, in the long recitative (Ed. Peters, No. 30) of Gluck's *Orfeo*, this reiterated case occurs twenty or thirty times on one page, no one would think of making the same appoggiatura twenty or thirty times. Two exceptions are to be noted; the "raising" is generally omitted

(1) When the melody thus created would represent an *error in style*; i. e., when, in severe music, it would make the phrase sentimental and weak.

(2) When the note thus introduced already existed in the same phrase as the highest, principal note (for then no new effect could be created by the change).

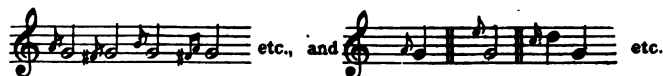
Among well-known arias, there exist a few where by some unexplained tradition the rule also holds good: "When you find, before a rest, accented and unaccented syllables of the same word on the same note, the accented syllable is raised one diatonic step." To these belong the great Sextus Rondo in *Titus*, "Deh per questo istante solo." The first three pages of it are but a succession of such examples, i. e., of couplets in which the first eighth has to be "raised one diatonic step." Susanna's garden-aria from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* becomes infinitely more

graceful in its first half, if the *appoggiatura* is introduced exactly as in the preceding recitative. Other examples that might be adduced almost all belong to the latter half of the eighteenth century.

With regard to *appoggiaturas* I shall notice here only what does *not* seem to be in accordance with the rules generally taught.

THE *APPOGGIATURA*—THAT IS, THE THING WHICH  
LEANS ON SOMETHING ELSE

The word *appoggiatura* has often been used in the last pages. The name serves for two kinds of embellishment:




In the first case, when the *appoggiatura* consists of a single note, the value is “dashed off,” as it were. The time consumed in its execution is exceedingly brief. If the *appoggiatura* consists of a group of two or more notes, it is understood that the ornament moves more or less rapidly.

In the second series the grace-note is rather pronounced, moves slowly, and enters *instead* of the principal note, diminishing the value of it by “about” its own length.

## HERESY

As to  etc., we are told by sev-

eral incontestable authorities, from Bach's time down to von Bülow and his successors, that "the short appoggiatura should always fall ON the beat, WITH the bass," thereby pushing the legitimate melodic step out of its place—what I should call *dislocating* the melody. Whatever may have been sentiment or rule in centuries gone by, I assert that our modern feeling has long outgrown the above theory. Let me state quite emphatically (speaking of the short grace-note), that the melody or figure should proceed as though the short appoggiatura  did not exist at all. Placing it *on* the beat would give it undue weight and prominence, would rob it of its peculiar character as a "grace," and weaken the melodic continuity. Excepting ONLY the "long appoggiatura," I hold that no ornaments should *ever* interfere with the march of the melodic movement. They should be "strewn in." The guiding principle is that the melodic notes should be sounded *precisely* in their appointed place, whether there are no ornaments at all, or fifty ornaments to be divided over the phrases. It is utterly unvocal to imagine the "light grace-note" falling on

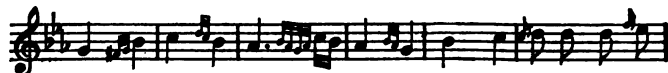


the more ponderous beat. It should *precede*, or fall in *between*, the notes.\*

What I insist upon for the single grace-note, I claim for groups also. Were Weber's famous air



provided with ornaments like the following:



it would and should sound this way:



and never, *never*:



The proof is too apparent to call for argument. Suppose you take Schubert's

\*The pupil should *always* practise his vocalise, or his song, first without any of the ornaments, thus plainly establishing the lines of the melody. The small embellishments are added later easily enough.



the phrase, the rhythm should remain precisely the same, whether you eliminate the grace-note



or add any number of small "graces" (also "appoggiaturas") to such a phrase.

As to the "long appoggiatura," it may be *convenient* to say that "it enters with its full value instead of and before its principal note," but the chief masters of it furnish proof to the contrary. As a sort of "general arrangement" for larger bodies of executants, and for the unthinking, one should not disturb this convenient rule. But the *artist* will feel that the long appoggiatura was never meant to move *in exact time*, else the composer would have written it in principal notes. Why not? It must have had another character, probably that of a calmly gliding, somewhat uncertain ornament *for which every trace of tradition is completely lost to us*.

Does anyone assert that in the whole violin-part of Bach's "Erbarme dich" (*Passion of St. Matthew*) the figures



should be played



No! Evidently the figures sounded more like



They might even have been played



as long as the appoggiatura entered, "calmly gliding," as a *suspension* instead of the principal tone.



hat den Grund und

In countless Bach instances:



Es ist zur Schlange worden

the values could never enter into the regular count; the appoggiaturas *could* not have been considered the equals of principal notes.

Türck, the standard-bearer of tradition, makes Bach's



sound thus:



I am convinced that this way of executing the appoggiatura makes Bach a modern, sentimental composer—which he never was. At the utmost it should be played\*



#### TRADITION

One hears so much about “tradition.” We who have heard Schubert’s songs sung by the daughters of those persons who heard and sang them in his own time and among his own people; we who have heard Schumann’s gifted wife play his compositions in changeless purity of reproduction—we may well say we have a Schubert and a Schumann tradition. But

\*A deplorable circumstance for “purity of style” in general has been the fact, that in all cheaper (consequently popular) editions all grace-notes (all appoggiaturas) have for many years been printed without the “dash.” I have been told there is some technical (*printer’s*) reason for this. But it has thrown all “tradition” and ornamentation into hopeless confusion. The student has been misled, and the mischief is difficult to remedy.

who will say that he has a Bach tradition? Of all our musical heroes, he was the most forgotten one. When his works were brought to light again, the inevitable break had occurred—the thread had snapped. He has been admired and worshipped, but he is less understood and certainly more imperfectly sung and played than any other master. I doubt whether any one knows how Bach wanted his figures to be played. I am sure that in his arias we modern vocalists do not find the right proportion of simplicity, grandeur and sentiment. And what can we assert about the “shading” of his choral masses?

*Tradition* is most elusive. Perhaps in earlier times it was followed more blindly, more closely, than in these days of the mad cry for individuality. What “tradition” may amount to, will be illustrated by the following sketch:

In one of my orchestral concerts, some years ago, I opened the programme with the Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*. Having heard Wagner conduct it and having listened for years to his trusted disciples’ reading of it, I led it as I remembered it so well. As chance would have it, both Thomas and Damrosch had the same number on their list at a similar period. After a brief space of time, in my travels across Europe, I was profoundly interested in Schuch’s con-

ducting of *Die Meistersinger* in Dresden. I went via Munich (where I heard Levy rehearsing the same Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*) to Vienna, where Richter swung his baton over a memorable performance of—*Die Meistersinger*.

One might have imagined that Wagner's strong personality, his presence at Bayreuth, and the short time elapsing since the composition of that opera, would have put an indelible stamp of "tradition" upon a not over-fantastical overture like that of *Die Meistersinger*. Making every allowance for the variability of my own receptiveness, I have to state that the conceptions of all these earnest men resembled each other as little as if they had conducted works of different epochs.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Miscellaneous Observations

#### *I. Shortness of Breath*

WHEN a pupil finds himself short of breath, it seems a contradiction to tell him, "Take the time of the piece a little slower."—"Slower yet? I shall have still less breath!" Yes . . . in certain places, probably. But by singing more slowly on the whole, the opportunities for taking breath become infinitely enlarged. If one joins to every breath but half a second's space of time, the air may descend *well down* into your lungs, while before you had but the usual time and could fill but *half* the lungs. You may expend a little more in singing, but you can take in two or three times as much. Is the advantage clear?

Every breath sent out from the bottom of one's lungs is always perfectly at one's command. The air held by the upper part of the chest *only* allows neither proper resonance, elasticity nor tone-management.

#### *II. Age and Vocal Endurance*

Do not think that one's voice can stand at twenty, or twenty-four, what experienced artists can endure at

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forty or forty-five. It is a grave mistake to hold up to pupils such power of endurance or of work. Rather teach them the wisdom of occasional silence—especially in youth.

### *III. Endurance in Practising*

The pupil will often find that a certain difficulty cannot be studied beyond a certain time. The throat stiffens—it refuses to act. I discountenance therefore *absolutely* all those exercises, in methods or in books of vocalises, which keep the student for several pages either upon chromatic runs, or upon staccato passages, or upon trills or syncopation or similar things.

I have been called upon often enough to hear vocalises like



It is quite impossible to obtain any fluency in such repeated tangles of difficulties. One ought to present the *same* difficulty off and on, relieving it by something which may rest the throat between times:

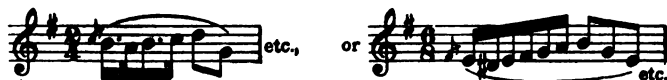




An exercise, two-thirds of which consists of staccato passages, tires the throat in briefest time. One that called for constant *diminuendos* from chest to middle voice, would do the same.

The pupil who is told to *practise* chains of synco-pation such as never occur later even in the most advanced literature, will soon have the feeling of one who tries to walk *against* the measure of a military march, and lose the time instead of acquiring steadiness.

Why certain difficulties are proposed to the beginner when they never are employed in "pieces," is equally difficult to understand. As a trifling matter one might mention Bordogni, "Vocalises:"



At least I know of no song or aria which begins with a grace-note.

#### *IV. Beating Time versus Interpretation*

As long as one has to "beat time," one cannot sing with expression or with any style. Only after one has thoroughly digested the rhythmical part of the music, may thought, sentiment and tone-beauty enter into one's interpretation. Be a good and ready *musician*,

besides being a vocalist! Learn not to consider the "how," until you are sure of the "what"!

#### *V. Breath-marks Promote Thoughtlessness*

A perfect "school of thoughtlessness" has been created by the placing of *breath-marks* everywhere. They should not be inserted except as a help for the beginner in perplexing passages, and for the advanced pupil in intricate vocalising. Far more than fingering in instrumental music, breath-capacity differs, for the individual, in vocal music. As the pupil advances, he should learn to phrase, *i. e.*, to breathe according to musical sense and *his own possibilities*. Even original breath-marks in works as sterling as Bordogni's "24 Vocalises pour Mezzo-soprano," or "12 Vocalises dédiées à la reine Isabella II," are open not only to discussion but to downright condemnation. The more a pupil learns to *think for himself*, the safer his progress.

The abuse of "revising," *i. e.*, putting in breath-marks and signs of expression for the singer, or fingering for the piano player, has gone to lengths beyond all patience. When we read Shakespeare, Dante's "Divina Commedia," or Goethe's "Faust," the reader is supposed to know his A-B-C and the pronunciation

of the words. But we who glory in performing Liszt and the Beethoven Concertos, Schumann's Fantasias and the Scherzi by Chopin, must see the editions so loaded down with fingerings for the scale of C and the most ordinary chords, that one cannot distinguish the notes for the very numbers! It would seem that he who has not learned to play scales or common arpeggios should not be taught a Rubinstein concerto. With all the fingering marked down note after note, he will not be able to play one single line. So if any one "breath-marks" Beethoven's "Ah! perfido," Bach's "Erbarme dich," or even Thomas' "Je suis Titania," he offends instead of assisting.

Danger-signals are always welcome—and needed. But it is not necessary to print, in an edition of Beethoven's "Adelaide," "Do not breathe in the middle of the words."

#### *VI. Fallibility of Printers' Ink*

Do not believe everything that is printed. Why should a printed word carry more weight with the reader than a spoken word to the hearer? Printers' ink is not infallible. Above all, do not believe every misprint in music, and do not work hours over an impossible interval or a misconstructed measure.

Also do not believe what has been told you here,

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just *because it stands in print*. Try these tenets and explanations, and judge impartially. Even the most valued advice does not suit all cases.

### *VII. New Editions and Revisions*

Many compositions of the old masters are made perfectly unrecognisable by "new editions" and "revisions," by the repeated "annotations" of more or less conscientious editors. We shall see, how even Schubert left the voice-part free from *f*, *ff*, *p*, *pp*, etc. His predecessors, from 1600 on, wrote in such a way that one may consider ninety-nine out of a hundred marks of expression in vocal parts of those centuries as additions of later "revisions," well-meaning, no doubt, but without any authority whatsoever.

*Disregard*, therefore, all such marks at the outset. Study the aria or canzonetta, or the sense of the song; learn the laws of light and shade; and then become a "creator" yourself by infusing your *personal* feeling into these compositions, instead of remaining a purely passive performer.

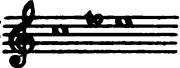
### *VIII. Similar Editions for Different Voices*

"Edition for Soprano or Tenor."


"Vocalises pour Contralto ou Basse."

From the very outset young singers are made to

believe, by reading such title-pages or headlines, that the literature for a high female voice should lie (of course, an octave higher) in the same keys as that for a high male voice—that basses should carry their

voices through phrases containing  with the same ease as contralti.

Let us scrutinise the profound differences between a tenor and a soprano voice.

1. The tenor voice (as a “genus”) has far less compass than the soprano. Below , where a soprano can sing effectively in certain ways and even sustain melodies, the tenor possesses few reliable notes. How small is the number of the tenors who can master the second part of *The Paradise and the Peri*, or do justice to the few *Messiah* measures



and the summer-aria of *The Seasons*! “Siegmunds,” of course, are tenor-baritones, and even physically of a certain type.

2. With a man the vocal bands, after violent tension, cannot at once utter the relaxed deep sounds with



3

sem-pre a-sco-so, a-sco-so, oh Di-o, sa-  
 ra! Sve-ne-rà que-stem-pia vo-glia far-dir mio, la  
 mia co-stanza, per-de-rà la ri-mem-branza  
 che ver-go-gna e orror mi fa, che ver-gogna, che ver-go-


3. The *agility* of the soprano exceeds by far that of the tenor.

In former times our northern grandfathers "quavered" and "warbled" more. Their romances required little earnestness and less power. The tenor now has to employ a fuller voice, and the dainty ornamentation of a melody which can give charm even to the frailest soprano voice, would appear out of place in his repertory.

4. The *tessitura*, that is, the level of melody on which the two respective voices may sing, is *not* the same, the tenor's being decidedly higher. One should but try to have the tenor part of a male quartette or men's chorus sung by a soprano in her upper octave!

A tenor may not possess one note above

but he can dwell on—and pronounce—by the half-

hour the notes between . The ordinary

soprano must descend at times below that level, else she feels the strain and her voice wanders from the pitch. The phrase of the Contessa in *Le Nozze di Figaro*:



is intensely difficult to poise, generally sung out of tune, and most uncomfortable to listen to, yet to a tenor such a “melodic level” would not even appear high. The soprano will always have more ease in attacking single high notes or melismas, but a tenor would prefer his melody in a higher key than the corresponding high female voice. Every soprano pupil in a German conservatory is made to sing Schubert’s “Der Neugierige” (*Müllerlieder*):



In this “tenor key,” though the air rarely touches even F#, the song works more mischief, and sounds more unpleasant and colourless from a soprano voice,



than can be expressed. *Soprano editions should not be Tenor editions.*

The baritone lacks the entire luscious, expressive low register of the Contralto, even though he can execute higher passages with similar ease in the same key. Basses, from their quality of voice and (partially) also from their trend of mind, should have a répertoire rather to themselves.

5. The tenor voice can articulate on high notes with infinitely greater ease than the soprano. Certain reiterations of high tones, especially on the brighter vowels, like:



are next to impossible to the female voice. If ever a necessity arises for a soprano to execute similar phrases, I would counsel as a great help a subterfuge to which no composer would ever object—the dropping of some unimportant syllable to a lower step (the same phrase changed to Soprano level):



Such a trifling change removes both the strain and its attendant dangers.

It seems unnecessary to repeat that the delay of practice in consonants and words "until the tone be perfectly formed" causes a useless loss of time to the student, and often greater evils. Of course, the master who gives his pupils songs for the sake of *expression*, in the unformed state of their voices, commits a grave error. All the faulty qualities of the voice reappear as soon as intelligence is superseded by emotion. The words, or lines, should be used—at first—for *technical purposes only*. And here I would say quite emphatically, that the decried Arioso or Aria (terms which convey a meaning of such high import to those who talk about vocal study in comparative ignorance) is infinitely more elementary, easy and preferable for the average student than even the smallest song. The Arioso moves more slowly—you can *think* better. The simple *cantabile* is generally of *one* colour, and contains no subtle or contrasting emotions—you can control your tone-colour. The Aria repeats its words over and over again; you learn to compare and to listen. The *song* is not only dangerous in the emotional sense; its changefulness in words, rhythm and accent makes it by far more difficult than the other two.

#### IX. *Voice versus Accompaniment*

On the whole, the accompaniment moves in the

same degree of force or tone-colour as the voice. But where declamatory diction prevails, or where the instrumental part has to represent the play of natural forces, and the like, the voice may move freely through all degrees of power to a faint accompaniment, or may be absolutely submerged in the sound-waves of instruments, as the effect may require. Artistic sentiment will be the safest guide, as it has to be in the case of a song-writer like Schubert, who leaves the singer entirely to his artistic inspirations.

Schubert began writing at a period when one melody served for three, five, six and more verses, to which naturally no *p* or *f* could be written in places, since a whole world of contrasting emotions might have to be expressed in the course of the song. His creations of greatest intensity—"The Young Nun" ("Die junge Nonne"), "The Spectre" ("Der Doppelgänger"), "Death and the Maiden" ("Der Tod und das Mädchen"), "The Erlking" ("Erlkönig"), "Restless Love" ("Rastlose Liebe"), "Withered Flowers" ("Trockne Blumen"), and numberless others do not contain *any marking* as far as the voice-part is concerned. *The singer must know.* The times when Schubert added a *pp*,  $\text{>}$  or *ff* are rare exceptions.

*X. Simplified Accompaniments*

The student should be able so to simplify his accompaniments as not to interfere with the use of his voice. Since the times of the classics, the pastoral simplicity of accompaniments has vanished. They now require pianistic ability, and often muscular force—at any rate, so much attention that only a consummate musician can master piano and voice together.

The time, I trust, will come when to the long series of vocal "collections" one more will be added in which the student will be spared useless mechanical difficulties, while being duly guided and supported by a sort of "skeleton accompaniment." The space occupied by a collection of perhaps a hundred "indispensable" songs and thirty or forty arias and ariosos would be comparatively small, the saving of time and fatigue enormous. And the step from such a "skeleton support" to singing to the complete, "filled in" accompaniment as the composer wrote it, is certainly not any wider than the difference of singing "Oh, rest in the Lord" with pianoforte accompaniment and later singing it with orchestra—the latter having to be done in public, after (generally) only one rehearsal for even the most difficult concert-arias.

Here follow some examples of simplification for ordinary study:

**Murmelndes Lüftchen**

Jensen

The musical score is written for a voice and piano. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The piece is in E-flat major. The vocal line is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The piano accompaniment is written on two staves (treble and bass clef) with a grand staff bracket. The score is divided into three systems. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The music features a gentle, flowing melody in the voice and a supportive accompaniment in the piano, characterized by arpeggiated figures and sustained chords. The overall mood is soft and lyrical, consistent with the title 'Murmeling Little Breeze'.



## Frühlingsnacht(I)

Schumann

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It consists of four systems of staves. The piano part is written in the lower staves, and the vocal part is written in the upper staves. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins with a piano (p) dynamic marking. The first system shows the piano playing a series of chords and the voice entering with a melody. The second system continues the piano accompaniment and the vocal melody. The third system features a trill (tr) in the vocal line. The fourth system concludes with 'etc.' markings in both the piano and vocal staves, indicating that the piece continues.

# Frühlingsnacht (II)

(much easier so, perhaps, for the average student)

*Animato*

Two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The second system continues the piece, with the treble staff ending in a measure marked 'etc.' and the bass staff continuing its accompaniment.

Schumann's "Aufträge" might be modified as follows:

Two systems of musical notation for piano, showing a modification of Schumann's 'Aufträge'. The first system shows a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a more active accompaniment. The second system continues the piece, with the treble staff ending in a measure marked 'etc.' and the bass staff continuing its accompaniment.



**Aus meinen grossen Schmerzen**

Franz

The musical score is arranged in three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The first system shows the vocal line with a melodic phrase and the piano accompaniment with a rhythmic pattern. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system concludes with the word "etc." written at the end of both the vocal and piano lines, indicating a repeat or continuation of the pattern.

Saint-Saëns's utterly unplayable aria might be practised to advantage as follows:

The musical score is presented in three systems, each consisting of a vocal line (soprano) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The first system includes the lyrics "Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix" under the vocal line. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system concludes with the word "etc." at the end of both the vocal and piano staves, indicating that the piece continues beyond what is shown.

## Auf dem Wasser zu singen

Schubert

The musical score is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature is 3/8. The first system shows the vocal line with eighth and sixteenth notes, and the piano accompaniment with chords and eighth notes. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system ends with 'etc.' in both the vocal and piano parts, indicating a repeat or continuation of the previous patterns.



Even here the arrangement of the last few bars points to an advanced pianoforte player and might be still further simplified.

### *XI. Available Translations*

Translations of poetry have been made in a great many unsatisfactory ways. The entire phrasing has frequently been upset thereby. *Cantilena* has been rendered impossible by the placing of awkward words on inconvenient notes, and often the composer's original thought has been seriously interfered with, while the singer had to wrestle with difficulties never planned; all by reason of translations which should have been left to other hands. In these cases the singer should have every right to substitute other, *better* words—to renounce slavish adherence to printed lines. Where original poems and "classics" are in question, no changes are admissible. But in adaptations the "right of possession" (precedence) belongs to him who advances the best claim.

### *XII. "Choice-Notes," Right and Wrong*

In many editions one finds certain parts of the melody "for choice" *lowered by an octave*—it happens even with single notes—when for the editor's convenience the place seemed too high. *Vice versa*, with a low passage, certain tones are simply *raised by an octave*. As if that in the least expressed the composer's meaning! To knock the top off a mountain

and put it in the valley below, or to remove a steeple to place it in the churchyard, certainly damages the outlines intended by nature or the architect. We see printed, for instance, on the occurrence of a climax in a vocal number:





Now, if the majority of singers cannot reach the high A, they might produce a similar effect with changes like the following:





But how any one could make a jubilant ending with the lower octave, remains to be seen. An infinity of similar examples could be found by glancing through a number of "revised" or "transposed" editions. Good taste has to furnish the interval to be substituted. We may be sure that it will never be the *octave below* or *above*.

On the other hand, artists who encounter passages

meant for display only may take this as a rule: A composer's intention may be carried out quite as well by choosing *the opposite extreme*. When the display passage presents a melodic line like  or

 an effect upon the hearer can quite as well be produced by changing the figuration to

 and . Of course, aspiration or triumph could not be expressed in a downward movement, nor dejection by high notes. But it suffices to produce *telling notes*, as long as the melody is not seriously broken into. In cadences one might even substitute a trill and a *coloratura* dash for a powerful, prolonged tone, or substitute for an inconvenient figure a brilliant sustained note.

### XIII. The Harmonic Minor Scale


The *harmonic minor scale* has no place in the vocalist's studies, except as a slow exercise for precision of pitch. The voice cannot fluently execute passages like the following:



*XIV. Sharp Keys versus Flat Keys*

Whereas it seems immaterial to soprano voices in what key they sing—excepting, perhaps, that in the key of C they are most liable to wander from the pitch—the lower voices greatly prefer to have their songs “put down” to keys “with flats.” Their aversion to sharps is perhaps not as inexplicable as it appears, and may be used as a peg on which to hang a fruitful observation.

The upper notes D and E, especially in reiteration, are decidedly fatiguing to organs of comparatively low pitch; and yet, as music and melodic invention goes, they must occur repeatedly, or in important places, in pieces composed in the keys of C, D and E. If you have a song in the key of E $\flat$  which does not often go up to E flat, you might even hazard an occasional F without finding the throat tired by previous phrases. In the key of D $\flat$  the danger is obviously still less; hence, that key is a favorite. To explain the disinclination to sharps, one should not forget that

the step  elevates the  a shade

above the enharmonic ; the same thing



occurring with all sharped intervals in comparison with flatted intervals. This constant forcing of the voice just a few vibrations upward beyond the expected, tires it unobservedly. Besides this, in all keys with sharps the eye encounters a C, and yet the voice has to make an effort for a note half a tone higher; the mind pictures a fairly comfortable D, and the throat has to stretch for an often perilous D sharp. Repetition of even such very slight efforts all over the voice finally produces a feeling of tension; while in keys with flats the notes in many cases *feel* easier than they look to be. There is always a relaxation and a sensation of comfort in consequence. No one realises to what an extent the throat is influenced by what the eye perceives—especially in those whose musical instinct is not immediate and almost subconscious.

#### *XV. Gliding from One Register into Another*

*Gliding from one register into another* (i. e., the blending of vocal sounds produced by different technical causes) can be accomplished satisfactorily only when the breath is *led high along the roof of the mouth*—almost held against the hard palate underneath the nasal passages. By so doing the throat proper becomes a secondary consideration, and remains elastic. The sound, as it were, is entirely trans-

ported out of the larynx into the upper cavity of the mouth, where the *blending* can take place *on neutral ground*. The higher up the bridging occurs, the safer and the smoother the result. Unnecessary muscles are gradually released, or needed muscles are gently drawn into play. The brain dictates the sound-mixture. The fibres obey in turn exactly as ranks of soldiers perform evolutions upon the general's word of command.

To feel the breath thus acting, or to be able to concentrate it in given directions, requires much more nicety of sensation than any beginner can expect to possess. After *years* of attentive practice such sensations often ripen and surprise even the experienced singer. Sometimes an absolute change of technique and tone-colour is the consequence. *Such singers should never say*: "I should have been told that before," or "Why did I not discover this method long ago?" No! It took all the painful trials of past experience, all the intelligent and laborious work of years, to form and shape their instrument, to sharpen their perception, in short, to lead them up to the point where they could see *and execute* what now becomes the stepping-stone to new accomplishment. *They could not have discovered it before*; they were not fit for it. They had to "grow into it" by degrees. The

joy of such a discovery is beyond expression, and the new truth thus found will not remain an *accident*, to disappear—no, it will stay with you, for it *is* part of yourself. You are at once creator and possessor.

It cannot be too often repeated, that the conscientious artist will find his organ and his capabilities modified from year to year, from period to period, and that he will continually have to remodel his "method" according to the requirements of his voice.

### *XVI. Singing False*

There are two causes of singing out of tune: one, that the singer's ear is not correct; the other, that his vocal organ is out of order.

We may be permitted to pass over the defect, when it results from incomplete musical training or fundamental musical inability to place sounds correctly in the scale. Such is also the case when certain intervals, for instance

major seconds:



major thirds:



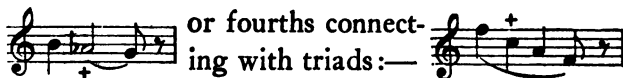
augmented fourths:



leading-notes:



are habitually taken too low; or when whole steps following half-tones, descending augmented seconds:



etc., never reach the intended tone downward. This is really *singing wrong*, not *singing out of tune*. Similar defects have to be overcome in most voices at the beginning of a pupil's training. Absolute precision of interval has ever to be *learned* and to be insisted upon; the more, as it is a well-known fact (not often enough told young singers!) that the piano, the usual instrument of accompaniment, has only *tempered*, and not *true*, intervals, and therefore can be no absolute guide. That part of tuition is the province of the "musician," not of the voice-builder.

Singing out of tune often results from a simple want of proportion between breath-power and vocal cords. If you blow too hard upon too yielding a surface, the tone will rise—naturally, as inadequate breath-power acting upon a sluggish organ may not make it react sufficiently. I generally have little anxiety when, during the first year's tuition, a *young* voice soars above pitch. That fault frequently diminishes of its own accord as the student learns, step by step, to control the different parts of his vocal

mechanism, and as with each succeeding month or year the fibres strengthen. If *timidity* (always accompanied by want of breath-pressure) be not the cause of a young singer's remaining below pitch, the case is involved and rather hopeless. The organ then may be weak or faulty by nature, and the master is not required to assume any responsibility with regard to such voices.

On the other hand, I have found it infinitely harder to correct "sharping" in *older* voices, *i. e.*, voices that had had use and wear, while "flatting," if not chronically occurring with overtaxed organs, became an explicable and amendable fault. With such vocalists the muscles, or fibres, have now grown resistant. Their development has attained its normal strength. In that condition, voices tend to produce tone more by *force* than by *elastic tension*. To obviate this tendency to sing below pitch in certain *places*, or under certain conditions (I do not refer to cases when *the entire voice* shows that defect), one has only to teach the singer to produce the note in question *in the higher register*—or *mixed* with the higher register. For then a muscular pressure, a contraction, had previously drawn the pitch down. *Begin practising such notes by starting a few steps above them, and learn to produce the faulty tones in the same way as you*

*sing the notes lying above them.* Less muscular fibre will thus be set in motion, and the muscles will move more easily in consequence. Singing and vibration will respond in a more elastic manner. The entire tone-body will be released and soon return to absolutely true pitch. But it takes a *very* keen ear to eliminate the forced kind of tone near the voice-divisions (for it is there the fault mostly occurs). The teacher's ear must be able to catch unerringly the *colour* of the tone to be substituted. The singer, on his or her part, must have the intelligence to *feel* the easier note. Singing *piano* (*p*) only in no wise obviates the difficulty. The voice must learn to stand the strain of *any graduated pressure*. Singing softly (*p*) to hide faults of intonation will but deceive the pupil—for a while.

Where the muscles are no longer capable of change, the case is hopeless. The tones *as such* cannot be "screwed up or down" while using exactly the same muscles. That would be simply *temporary forcing*. One should be able to add to them, to give them force; to eliminate, in order to restore flexibility (lightness). Creating satisfactory pitch depends partly on that modification, but quite as much on the development of the breathing-apparatus and the wise apportionment of breath,

to which, *at all times*, one cannot pay too close attention.

### *XVII. Atmosphere*

I am not overstating matters when I say that four out of five young violinists, immediately after the ending of their number and before any applause or sign of approbation can be expressed, let their hands go twang! twang! over the open strings. Of course, it is only a *habit*; they wish to ascertain whether the strings have remained in tune. But this habit destroys all tonality, all effect; it is offensive and thoughtless to a degree.

A similar offence the singer commits when she, her last note scarcely being over, turns to the room, or to some friend, or to the accompanist with an irrelevant remark about the room, or her own voice, or the acoustics, or the composition just finished, destroying all the "atmosphere" she just had taken so much pains to create. I would tell the performer: Do not show your nervousness in this wise. If you have touched somebody's heart, let the impression deepen. Singer and listener will be the better for a bit of silence. But make it a rule, "Until the last note of the accompaniment has died away, remain as transfixed in the attitude your last measures have compelled you to take.

Hold the audience and the applause suspended—out of respect for the accompanist and for the composer's work." If the audience break in with untimely applause, you will not be the loser—you will receive a *double* ovation by its reiteration at the actual end.

### XVIII. *Style*

There is much talk about "style." After all, style in music is the just expression of, or adaptation to, conditions such as may be suggested, or indicated; for example, the period of the composition, the trend of the poetry, or the *milieu* for which the music is intended. One needs a subtle instinct, elevation and refinement of thought, some historical imagination, and even dramatic fancy, to find the right colour for each case. One must *think*—sometimes one has to *dream* about the "atmosphere" in which song or scene is to be placed. A French *Vilanelle* of old Watteau times, with their mock-shepherds and painted court-ladies of (more or less) high degree, can have nothing in common with the purity of an eighteenth-century oratorio. A German *Lied* becomes an anachronism, when delivered with the pathos of Italian opera. Operatic numbers sung with the even colour of sacred music (which in all its shadings never oversteps a cer-



tain "reverential" tone—something beyond the pale of every-day life) would be an impossibility. And yet even in opera the *coloratura* passages of a Mozart, Rossini or Delibes require styles of delivery totally different one from the other, marking the development in the course of a century.

It would lead too far to point out fundamental characteristics. I will mention but one trifle—one "trick of the trade," as it were—which will help to transform the interpretation of a song from flippant superficiality to dignity.

It has been said before, while speaking of rhythm, that the smaller notes on unaccented beats may, or should, be *slighted* in almost every case. This is such a natural law, so grounded in the very spirit of the spoken language, that any remark about it seems a superfluity. Yet if one wants to *create* "lightness," one has but to exaggerate the triflingness of such minor notes. If, on the other hand, one desires to produce the effects of stateliness or heaviness, exaggerate the importance of these secondary steps. It will be found that *the whole movement changes at once*. And not only does it change in "character." The very *speed* seems to have undergone a change. The piece will sound, with exactly the same metronome-time, either much slower or quicker, according

to the treatment of the lesser beats. This suggestion has helped many a pianist out of great difficulty to delightful effects, and is especially valuable to singers whose voices lack the reposeful quality required in certain severe or elevating numbers. In broadening the smaller notes the rhythm, however, should never be disturbed.

## CHAPTER IX

### About Expression and Interpretation

THE advanced pupil generally brings to her lesson everything *but* expression, and expects the teacher to provide that for her exactly as the chemist takes powders or elixirs from his boxes and jars—a magic potion for each individual case.

Why this absence of imagination? Why this wilful abnegation of intellect? For what reason should it be so much worse to be criticised for singing with *wrong*, or with too much, sentiment, than for singing *with none at all*? It is expecting rather too much to ask that teachers *feel* everything for you. That selfsame song is taught, perhaps, to ten persons by the same teacher within the same fortnight. Are all these renderings to be mere echoes of one single voice? Are they to offer no individuality? I should think it much easier to prune a plant than to grow it; that it would be much better to develop one's powers of imagination spontaneously (even at the risk of having exaggerations or misconstructions pointed out) than to reduce yourself to a blank for some one else to write on.

In the great lines of *interpretation* the singer can-

not go far astray, if he ponders thoughtfully the meaning of his words. According to temperament and voice, the same conception will sometimes assume a different shape with different people. If a singer should take "Che farò senza Euridice" in the tempo of a funeral march, or if a conductor should lead the Andante of Beethoven's fifth symphony like a minuetto, or the duet of Zerlina and Masetto in such haste that no living soul could understand a word of it, I should scarcely call that a "conception" or a "misconception." It would simply be carelessness, ignorance, or (as sometimes happens) a wilful outrage—as when a train must be caught, or a singer is to be "rattled," a première to be ruined or a performance to be "rushed" at all hazards. That artist is rare who does not vary even in his finished reproductions in accord with the mood of the day, the state of his health, the chill of the hall or the warmth of an audience, and a hundred minor influences. Precisely this makes an *interesting* singer so attractive, that he cannot be the same under all circumstances—that he is something more than a music-box. Lay out your work along firm lines; on each occasion you will find something novel creeping in, something old falling off. If your conception is a *vital* one, the process of life goes on continually, as in the full-leaved tree.

Yet sometimes one has a choice of "interpretations." Take, for instance, Brahms's "Feldeinsamkeit." I have two quite distinct conceptions of it; I think both of them right—according to voices. For sopranos with light, sunny voices I take the whole song buoyantly, devoid of "body" and volume, luminously floating like the cirrus-clouds of which the second verse speaks. The wrapt soul itself seems a mere ray of intense light losing itself in all this dazzling atmosphere. To spin out one's breath in lengths quite unusual is but a means for picturing the far-away distance, the absence of everything material. Quite different is my "interpretation" for heavier and lower-pitched voices. These I make begin with rich fullness. Every tone has to resemble the deep, soft grass in which one is supposed to be resting; the sounds should be velvety, caressing, speaking of infinite comfort. *Their* "clouds in the sky" are not an "aspiration." They represent only a far-off decoration to their earthly, completely happy state. And when *these* singing souls move out from the perfume-laden valley, death "depersonalises" them not. They have a *heart* left which swells in intense, unspeakable happiness, enjoying, adoring, infinitely blest.

Part of Rubinstein's "Asra" represents a study for

interpretation. One begins the song in a purely descriptive tone of voice—an etching of few lines, as it were, representing a tone-picture like an oriental sketch by Gérôme. But now, who shall say with what rapidity of action, what passionately subdued tone (not to be overheard by her attendant slaves), with what imperiousness, or simple, unconscious indolence, the sultan's daughter utters her question? The key to the riddle, the colour of all interpretation, lies here. Your own heart has to tell you, whether the princess thinks the young slave's constant presence presuming and offensive; whether infinite pity moves her heart; or whether interest, a deeply surging passion on her part prompts her to approach him, "the grain of dust beneath her sandaled feet." Is her tone to promise him release from slavery, love's recompense—or cruel martyrdom?

To the chosen conception you have to adapt the succeeding pause—in this case a thrilling means of expression. And the Asra's first notes must be like the waking of a man from his dreams. From her words he begins to gather, with ever-increasing conviction, whether his waking be to hope, to love—or to death.

Schumann's "Nussbaum" offers another choice. The lighter, the more agile the voice of the singer,


the swifter the movement of the song may be. You then see the green, feathery leaflets pointing out from every branch and twig; you feel the fresh, sunlit breeze passing; you perceive the silhouette of the dreaming young girl through the gleaming shadows. In her face and her pose you read the scarce-awakened sentiment caressing fugitive, half-confessed dreams. Everything is innocent, almost unconscious — a "promise."

With fuller voices the very speed of the song changes. It is no longer fluttering. It becomes undulating, swaying. The very first notes announce almost the *shape* of the walnut-tree. We no longer see the leaves sprout, we hear them rustling; we dwell in the perfume of its spicy blossoms; sentiment creeps in, where the lighter voice only drew a picture. And the warmth of sentiment casts a ray of romance into the maiden's heart. Her dreams are already more positive. She is *sure* of a fulfillment. The whole song becomes heartfelt.

In Mozart's "Voi che sapete" you *can* make the page Cherubino imbue his song with all sort of *espièglerie*, coquetry, insinuations and passionate warmth, making the song quite varied and interesting. I prefer, however, to take it as a half-grown boy would recite a poem he had made—simply, a lit-

tle awkwardly, perhaps. Only in the very few lines, broken with brief rests by the composer, in those six or seven phrases preceding the return of the theme, he should forget himself before his Mistress (used here in the commanding, true sense of the word), the Countess—whom, after all, he holds in awe—ending again in a half-bashful, half-playful request. The first conception would make Cherubino an incipient *roué*, the second an attractive boy who is but surprised by the sudden consciousness—of woman in this world.

Franz's "Im Herbst" (In Autumn) contains the strangest contradictions of declamation, stranger still in so great a writer of songs. His initial phrases all run :



The heath-er is brown, its pink bloom is fled,  
The birch-tree stands bare, of green dress be - left,  
The ros - es once blos - somed, now fade and die, -  
I was once so rich, etc.

and they repeat again and again; and so it continues. I cannot see how the thing THAT IS can be sung *p*, and the SHADOW, the GHOST of it, always with  
 < > . The ascending scale would make the voice increase *under any circumstances*. With all due respect, I suggest a *precisely opposite* marking.



Moreover, the human voice has for its deep notes the power and colour of the chest-register, thus finely representing the reality, the hardness, the cruelty of the present. Let the fainter, more tender tones of the middle voice whisper "the dream of the past." *Reverse* the marking. For so it goes on even to the end ("Mein Lieb ist falsch! o wäre ich todt!"):



The *p* at the end is weak, is impossible. It is to be a "collapse," but it is also a cry of despair. The person who sings that song is *not* going to die—knows that death will *not* come as a release. That passion *will* continue to devour; those tears *will* continue to sear the heart; that cry for the past, lost felicity *will* ring through years and years of lonely nights . . . a world of agony must pervade those marvellous last few notes. But "*p*"—never! The effect after the tremendous outbreak on the *a* flat will *always* be that of a "*p*," whatever register or force you may use. I suppose Franz felt *that*, when marking the song as he did.

Schubert's song "Trockne Blumen" (*Müllerlieder*; cycle of 24 songs), in its place in the cycle, should

only be the outflow of the simple heart of a simple man—a miller's journeyman. And when the suppressed tears which pervade every phrase of the beginning give way to the hopefully jubilant ending, it should be only as the sun breaks out once more after an afternoon shower before setting, or as Spring conquers the ice-gorges of Winter; consoling, healing. But if that song is sung apart from the rest, the first pages may be interpreted with a tragic feeling too deep to foreshadow anything but death. With an infinite variety of intonation a life-dream is lived over once again, till the last act comes, and, after death, even a sort of revenge. For the faithless one, the heedless one, then will *know*, she, who did not want to know before, and her regret will not relieve her pangs of solitude, while the newly-born flowers will speak of peace and of heavenly rest from the grave of the sufferer.

In Schumann's "Waldesgespräch" everything turns upon the tone one finds for the sprite—the witch Loreley. "He," in the first lines, is a swaggering, thoughtless youngster who wishes to toss off a romantic adventure as one would quaff a goblet of wine. But the sound of "her" first words reveal at once a personality from a different world, half flesh and blood, half spirit—the woman withal "who has

lived" . . . and is tired to death of living thus. She, this Loreley, is the forerunner, the prototype, of Kundry; she was conceived long before Wagner imagined his Kundry, and she shows her personality and accomplishes her mission in Schumann's song in as many phrases as Wagner needs hours for the delineation of his sorceress. In my opinion these first discouraged, half-audible sounds of hers should fall like a chill dew upon the gallant offers of the young knight—who has not yet seen her face! Even her warning should be given as with an averted face. He appears to her too young, too venturesomely foolish; she does not care for the new victim; she wants nothing more of *any*. But when he presses his suit with greater instance, coming closer, she *has* to turn and look at him—and to look is his and her perdition. The vicious, evil drop in her blood boils up tumultuously, when she beholds "the man." She becomes like the tigress whose nostrils smell blood. All this must be expressed in the short silence which precedes the knight's outcry: "Du bist die Hexe Loreley!" ("Thou art the witch Loreley! God help me!") Now, when she begins her last: "Du kennst mich wohl" ("Well know'st thou me!"), the sound should issue uncanny and blood-curdling, suppressed yet intense, from behind teeth that tear and from a

heart that knows no pity, until with a cruel taunt it rises to a climax in which mingle the powers of hell and the voice of doom.

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#### CONCLUSION

One may err in portraying a sad, heroic nature as a sentimental, moody character; one may turn an expression of banter and playful badinage into reproach; one may miss all opportunities for impassioned utterance and delineate, in their stead, commonplace evenness. *Intelligent interpretation* sometimes exists, where no technique is found except the most rudimentary, natural mode of expression. But, on the whole, interpretation is the finishing touch—the seal and stamp upon a document otherwise valueless.

After all, it is here that *personality* reveals itself. You may teach a person to *dare*, but you cannot make him *feel*. You can make people *see* and *think*, but you cannot give them wings of fancy and imagination as their own. You may *awaken* people, but you cannot put a soul into a stone. Recognise limitations of feeling as clearly as limitations of the voice itself.











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